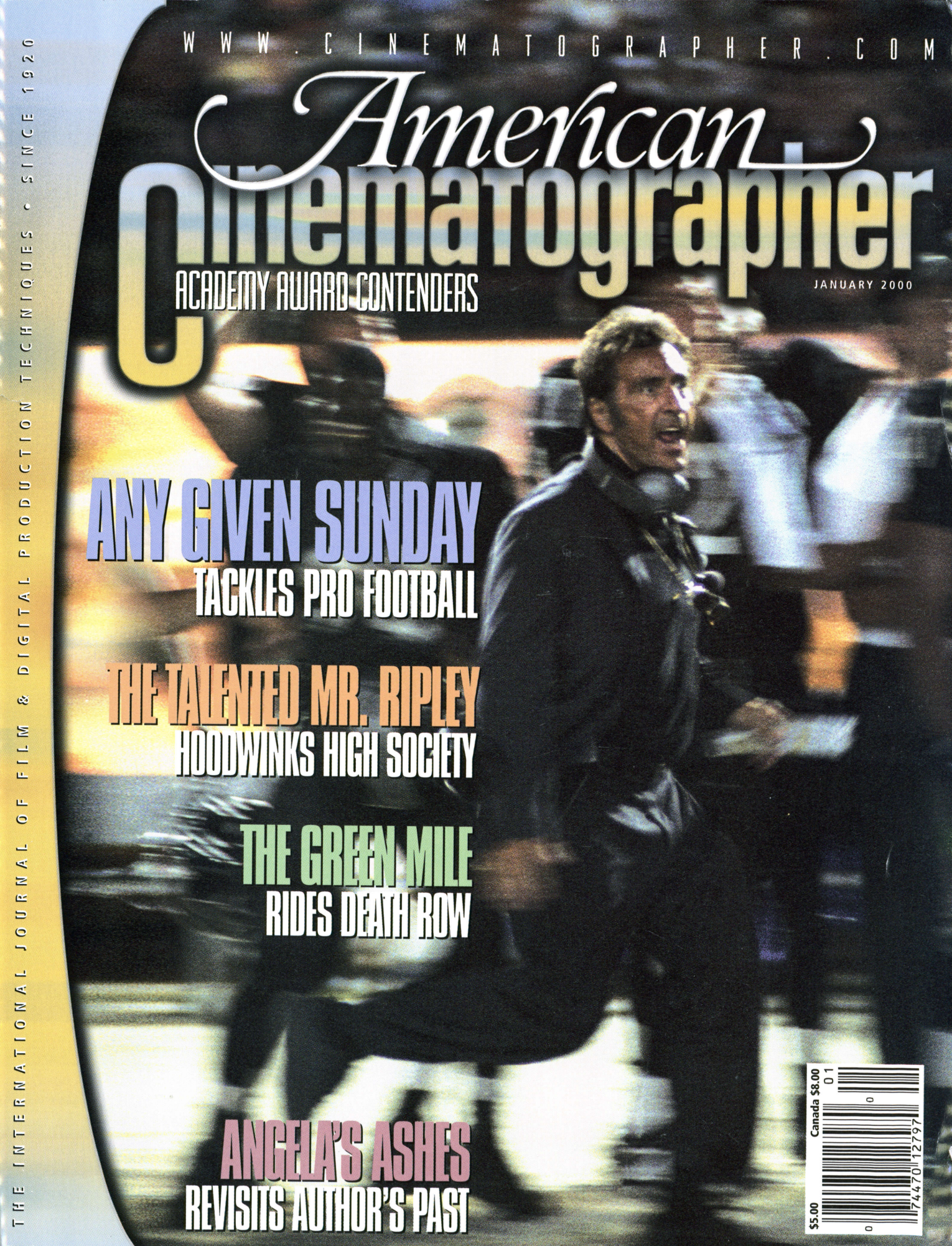
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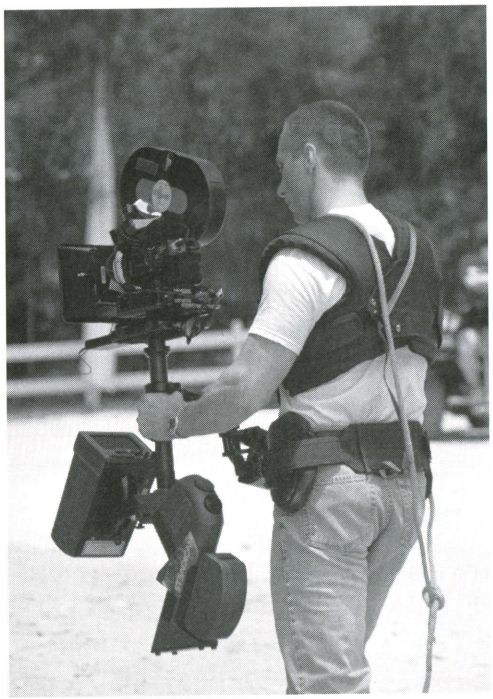
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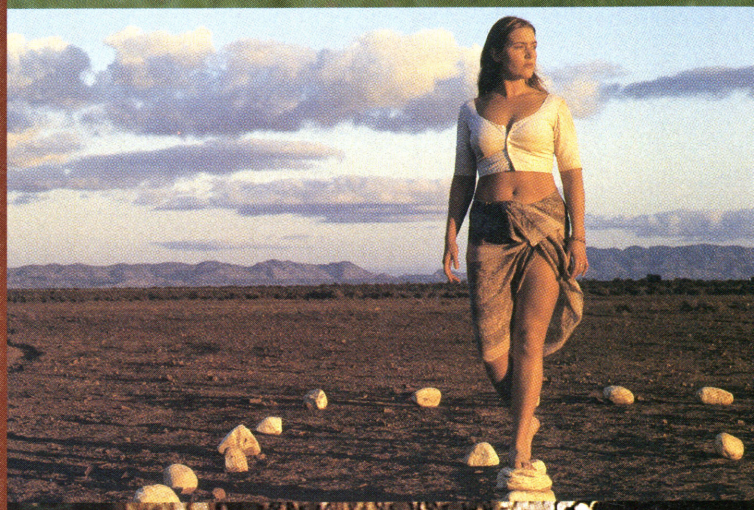
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The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques

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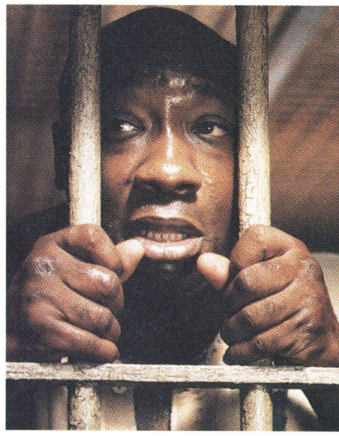


On Our Cover: Miami Sharks football coach Tony D'Amato (Al Pacino) races down the sideline during a tense game in *Any Given Sunday*, a high-energy drama directed by Oliver Stone and photographed by Salvatore Totino (photo by Robert Zuckerman, courtesy of Warner Bros.).

Contributing Authors:
Jay Holben
Chris Pizzello
Patricia Thompson
Ray Zone



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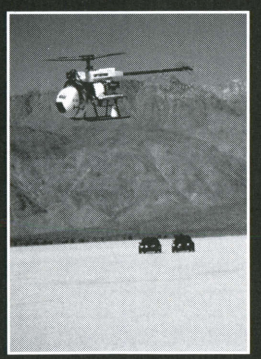
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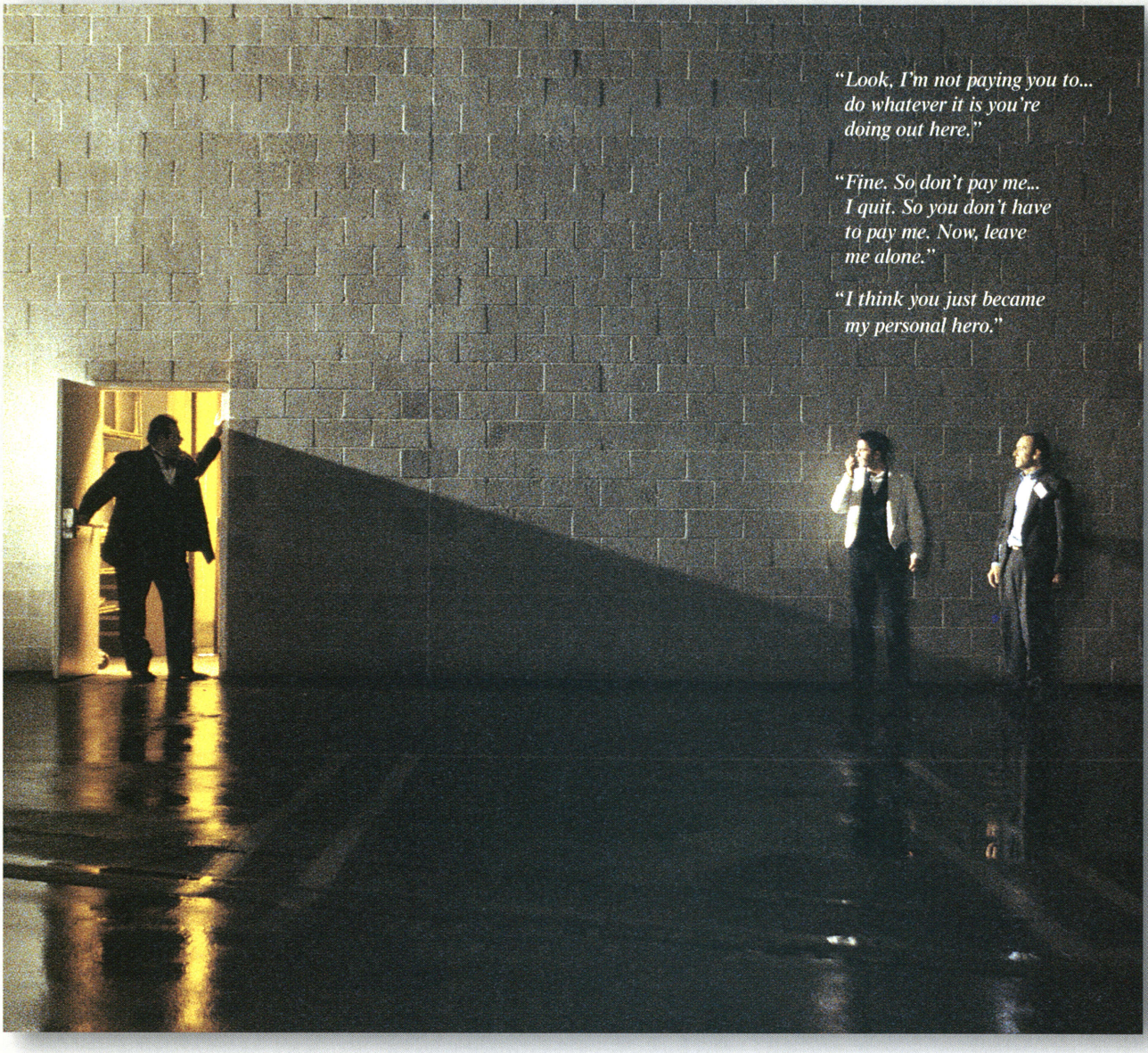
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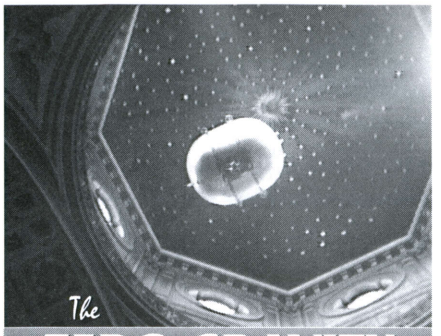
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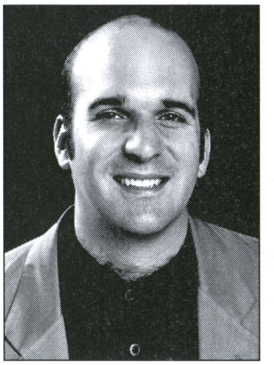
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Editor's Note



For millions of Americans, pro football has long been a staple of Sunday afternoons. If the U.S. is the modern-day equivalent of ancient Rome at its peak, then gridiron tilts are surely our version of gladiatorial combat. While sacking the quarterback is certainly safer than slicing up an opponent with a sword, football still allows its fans to experience a full range of vicarious thrills. It can also be viewed as an apt metaphor for American society, in which individual ambition often collides with a collective (read: corporate) goal.

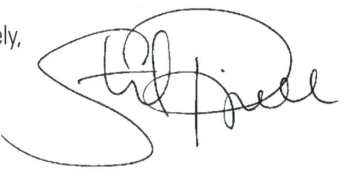
In his new film *Any Given Sunday,* director Oliver Stone explores these themes from every angle, like a coach mapping plays on a blackboard. This time around, however, Stone teamed with a new cinematographer, Salvatore Totino, when his longtime collaborator behind the camera, Robert Richardson, ASC, proved unavailable. Our coverage of the picture includes both a detailed article on Totino's work ("Smash-Mouth Football," p. 34) and a lively interview with the always-provocative Stone ("Calling the Plays," p. 48).

Since Oscar season is upon us, this issue of *AC* also includes coverage of several other pictures that may compete for the golden statuette. The first of these prestige projects, *The Green Mile,* was directed by Frank Darabont, who followed the success of *The Shawshank Redemption* by adapting his second consecutive script from a Stephen King prison story. Darabont (see interview beginning on p. 86) teamed with cinematographer David Tattersall, BSC ("The Longest Walk," p. 72) to bring King's fiction to the big screen.

In *Angela's Ashes,* an Irish family finds itself imprisoned not by iron bars, but by abject poverty. Directed by Alan Parker and photographed by Michael Seresin, BSC, the film presents a detailed and very naturalistic rendering of the tribulations depicted in author Frank McCourt's autobiographical, Pulitzer Prize-winning book. In our article about the production ("A Hard-Knock Life," p. 96), Seresin and other key members of Parker's crew discuss their approach to the material.

The world depicted in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* ("Alter Ego," p. 56) could not be farther from the dank alleys of Dublin. Adapted from a novel by Patricia Highsmith, this high-toned tale of treachery plays out in a succession of elegant European locales. No strangers to scenic surroundings, director Anthony Minghella and cinematographer John Seale, ACS, ASC have followed their Oscar-winning collaboration on *The English Patient* with another sumptuous effort.

Sincerely,



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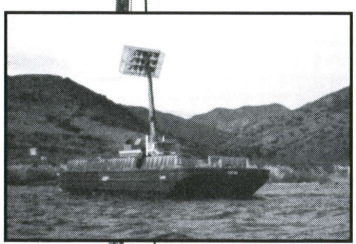


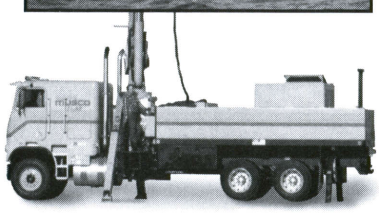
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The Post Process

Networking in an Ever-Shrinking World

by Debra Kaufman

In the September 1995 issue of *AC*, I surveyed the numerous long-distance networking solutions available to the entertainment industry ("Hollywood Dials into Distance Networking"). Since then, many of the once-hot names in this arena have either shrunk to mere shadows of themselves or simply disappeared. The reason why is clear: the Internet.

A few years ago, no one could have anticipated the impact of the Internet, which has now blossomed into a means for companies to do everything from selling stock footage to obtaining approval of visual effects and editing. The speed, ease of use, and availability of the Internet has made it an ideal solution for collaborative review.

But, as always, there is a downside. In principle, the Internet allows the transmission of files of any size, but many ISPs limit file size. Predictability can also be a bit dicey: an e-mail sent today isn't necessarily received promptly. Both drawbacks can present difficulties when working with high-resolution film images and production deadlines.

For those who need true video transmission in real time, ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) has emerged as a technology that can provide long-distance networking. Unlike the store-and-forward technology of the Internet, the fiber-based ATM is able to carry voice, video and data over one single infrastructure in real time. The downside is that ATM isn't offered throughout the entire country, and is both expensive and somewhat complex.

For those who don't want to incur the costs of ATM yet desire more security, speed and predictability than the Internet, WAM!NET is one solution. Making its debut at the last NAB conference, Minnesota-based WAM!NET got its start as a global digital-networking service for print media in graphic arts and advertising, with such clients as Time Publishing and Sears Advertising. A self-contained service, WAM!NET is an MPEG-2-compressed video store-and-forward delivery system. "WAM!NET takes the concept of the Internet a step forward," explains director of business development George Anderson. "We're creating a private Internet and selling connectivity to whoever wants it. We lease our own lines, so this is truly a private network in every sense of the word. Target customers are operations that need more reliability, privacy and bandwidth."

WAM!NET customers don't have to purchase any new hardware to be connected to the service. WAM!NET provides a video encoder/decoder that digitizes the video into an MPEG-2 file (although some customers, such as NBC, prefer to provide their own encoder/decoder). Also on the customer's end is the Network Access Device (NAD), an SGI platform (which manages the entire file-transfer process) and a Cisco Systems router (which is the direct interface to the privately leased network). Users can encode their MPEG-2 files at various bit rates, from 1.5 megabits per second up to about 12 — the higher the bit rate, the higher the resolution. When the NAD receives a clip, it can be pulled to a desktop review station through the

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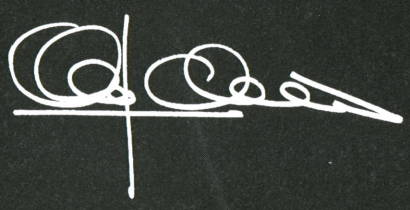
ELLIOT DAVIS



"Cinematography is like sketching. It's a language that can't always be articulated. Maybe you don't want the audience to see what's in a character's mind, but you want them to feel what the story asks them to feel. That is the most important thing. There is no sub-text without context and that is what the cinematographer provides. For me, reality is just a place to start. My job is to use whatever is necessary to express the meaning and emotions of a story. What you omit can be as important as what you put in a picture. If I have a feeling about something, I'll interpret it intuitively. Art is always expressionistic and I am in filmmaking for the art."

Elliot Davis has compiled more than 30 credits, including *Light it Up, Breakfast of Champions, Forces of Nature, Things to Do in Denver When You are Dead, Out of Sight* and *King of the Hill.*

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Two entertainment industry customers that have already signed onto the WAM!NET system are The Mill, one of London's leading digital film and commercial effects facilities, and its sister company Mill Film, a visual effects facility that has worked on *Babe: Pig in the City*, *Enemy of the State* and *Shakespeare in Love*. The Mill is already plugged into SohoNet, an LAN that allows it to share files with other facilities within the Soho area.

For *Babe: Pig in the City*, Mill Film used multiple ISDN lines to send low-res Avid cuts to the production base in Sydney, Australia. Currently, the visual effects company is using WAM!NET to transfer temporary compositions and Avid cuts of DreamWorks' *Gladiator* to director Ridley Scott at his Los Angeles postproduction offices. "WAM!NET is vastly faster," reports Bill Schultz, director of technology for Mill Film, in comparing the two experiences.

According to Schultz, Mill Films, which is doing all of the visual effects for *Gladiator*, sends 600 megabytes of data to Los Angeles every day, including Avid cuts at a compressed 720 x 486 resolution, the same resolution at which the film is being edited. "It would have been impossible for us to have done this a year and a half ago," notes Schultz, "What would have taken several hours we now can transmit in a few minutes."

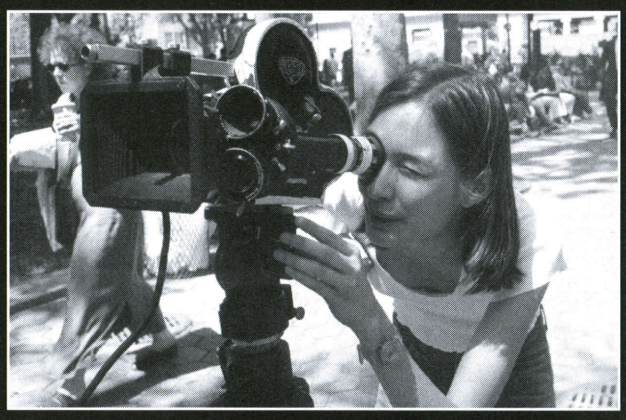
WAM!NET's Anderson reports that the company currently has 35,000 customers signed onto the network. Approximately 10,000 of them use the system several times a day. With operations in Western Europe and Tokyo, the system is already global and promises to grow. Charges include a monthly service fee for setting up the local loop and in-house terminal, plus a per-megabyte charge that goes down in price with greater volume.

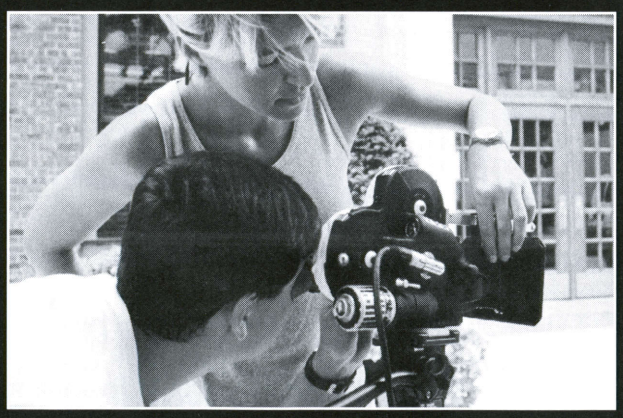
"This system definitely makes it possible for us to do this kind of work in London for Hollywood filmmakers," concludes Mill Film's Schultz. "WAM!NET shrinks the globe." ■

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Production Slate

compiled by David E. Williams and Douglas Bankston

A Widescreen *Cider House*

by Eric Rudolph

Frustrated by more than a decade of failed efforts by several screenwriters, novelist John Irving took it upon himself to pen a script based on his 1985 bestseller *The Cider House Rules*. In fact, Irving's development struggles were so remarkable that the author has written *My Movie Business*, a new book about his novel's transition from page to screen.



Homer Wells (Tobey Maguire) and Candy Kendall (Charlize Theron) cruise through the scenic New England countryside.

Photos by Stephen Vaughn courtesy of Miramax Films.

Ultimately, Swedish director Lasse Hallström was given the responsibility of bringing *Cider House* to the screen. The filmmaker was aided by some stellar talent on both sides of the camera, including cinematographer Oliver Stapleton, BSC; actors Michael Caine, Tobey Maguire, Charlize Theron, Jane Alexander, Kathy Baker, Kate Nelligan and Delroy Lindo; and musical artists Erykah Badu and Heavy D.

The movie version of *Cider House* follows the life of Homer Wells (Maguire) as he matures from twice-returned orphan to lay physician at the titular orphanage during the first half of the 20th century. Wells learns his medical skills, including the performance of illegal and questionable abortions, from Dr. Wilbur Larch (Caine), who runs the foundling home with deep love for the abandoned children and a jaundiced view of the outside world. When the fully grown Wells is given an attractive opportunity to leave for that outside world, however, he takes it. Undaunted by his young charge's departure, Dr. Larch tries to lure Homer back, sensing that his own time is limited.

To bring this complex period piece to life, Hallström (*My Life as a Dog, What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*) specifically sought out director of photography Stapleton, whose credits include such features as *My Beautiful Laundrette, The Grifters, Restoration, Kansas City* (see *AC* Sept. '96) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*AC* May '99). Hallström had wanted to work with the cinematographer for some time, and their mutual admiration for the work of Sven Nykvist, ASC (who has shot several of Hallström's films) drew them together.

After a torturous series of discussions, Hallström and Stapleton decided to shoot *The Cider House Rules* in widescreen. Their choice works beautifully for the story, a good deal of which is set outdoors in an apple orchard. "I was actually pushing for the 1.85:1 format," says Stapleton from the set of a forthcoming David Mamet film, *State and Main*, which is also shooting in New England, where *Cider House* was filmed in its entirety. "I thought the apple orchard, with its hilly landscape, would fit better within the standard frame. I used to make up rules about which format to use, but I've given that up now. Choosing between cinema formats is like sitting down to do a painting, where you have no format restrictions. You ask yourself, 'What do I want this to look like?' and decide on the format from there."

After visiting the locations, Hallström determined that the film should be composed in widescreen. The decision was made only about two weeks before production was to begin, so obtaining anamorphic lenses at the last minute wasn't even considered.

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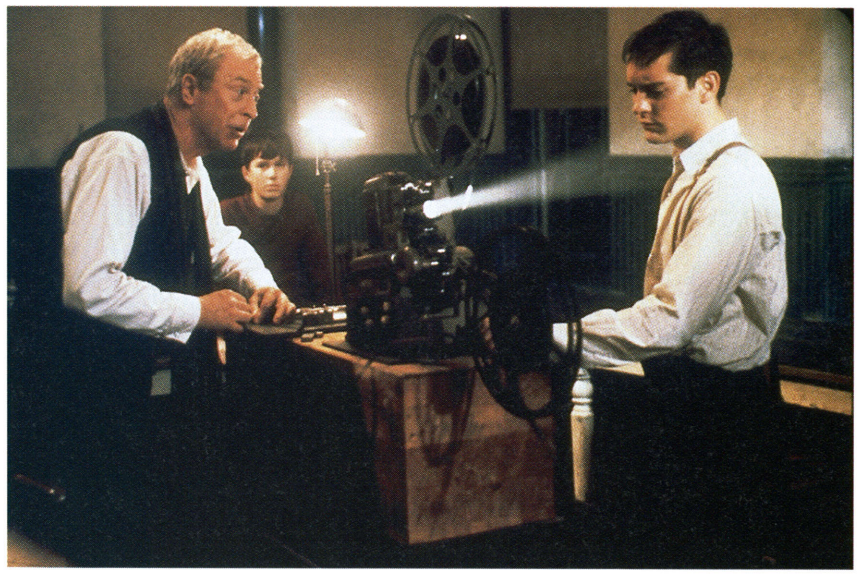
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what to do," he says. "I thought the movement of the camera around them would amplify that feeling."

Last year, *AC* visited the Scott Farm apple orchard in Brattleboro, Vermont while Stapleton and his crew were lighting and photographing key night interiors in a rather ramshackle, working cider house. The long wooden room was cramped with a half-dozen actors playing apple pickers whom Wells teams with after leaving the orphanage. The small windows were tented and the large lights outside remained in place from previous work on day interiors. Working quietly and precisely, the cameraman lit the room to look as if it was illuminated solely by bare hanging bulbs.

The cider house itself — intensely crowded, stuffy and dreary — appeared to help actors Maguire, Badu and Lindo slip easily into the scene's reality. The cinema lighting was barely visible to the observer because of the diminutive size of the Minuet lamps Stapleton often uses in such situations. In fact, he carries four of his own 500W Minuets to each production. "Those lamps are great because they are so small, focusable and controllable," he explains. "They have their own built-in cutters, which makes them great space-savers. They are basically theatrical lamps; in the theater world, they are known as Lekos. In the States there are larger, slightly less controllable versions of them known as Source Fours. Some cinematographers seem very reluctant to use any kind of theatrical lamps, and I have no idea why that is."

For the extensive orphanage scenes, Stapleton had more room and flexibility, so he left his Minuets on the truck. However, he still took his own individualistic approach to the direct-lighting scheme that he had devised, primarily using small Fresnels and 1K and 2K Zip lights. His crew removed the front crates from the lights, fitting them with custom-made snoots that were two to four feet in length. "Zip lights are bounced lights by nature, because of their 'scoop' configuration," Stapleton details. "With the 'super snoots' we built, however, they stay soft but are highly directional and controllable. They are also quite space-friendly because you don't need separate diffusion frames. You can cut or diffuse the directional soft lights even further if you have the room — you get a nice soft line when you cut or tease them."



Dr. Larch (Michael Caine) and Homer set up a makeshift cinema.

To provide fill light, Stapleton would bounce a tungsten lamp cooled with ¼ CTB into a stippled gold reflector on the floor, something he learned as a young man while shooting film in South

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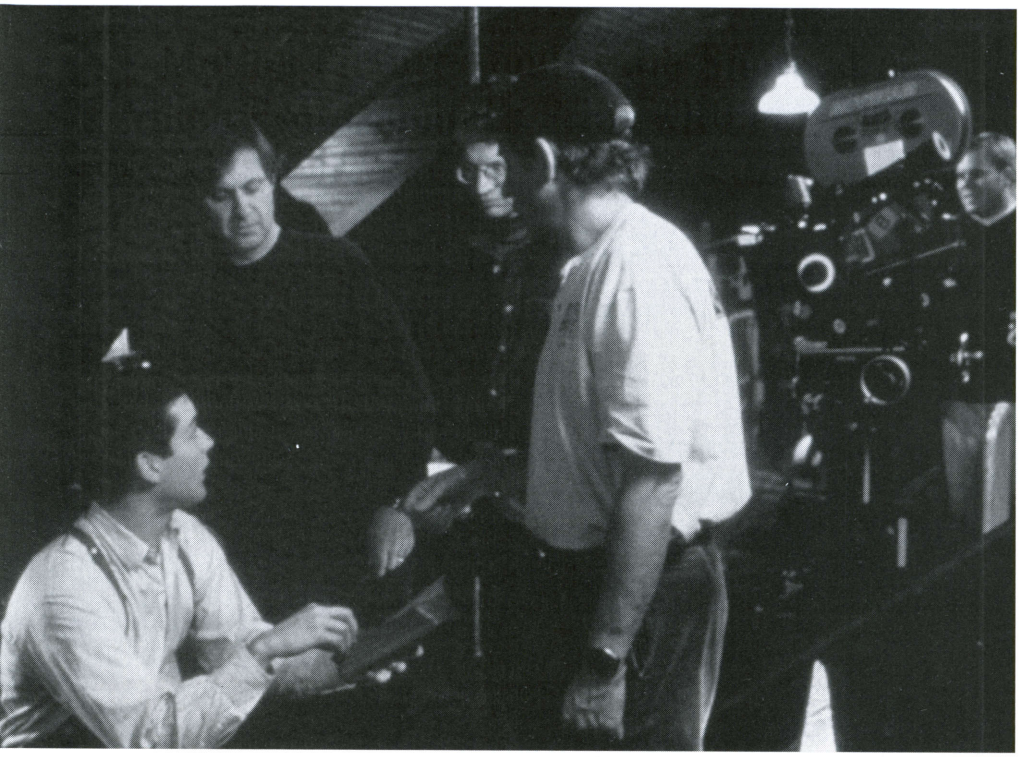


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Director of photography Oliver Stapleton (in cap) squares up a scene on the set with actor Tobey Maguire (seated and Director Lasse Hallström (second from left).

Stapleton opted instead to shoot in Super 35.

Working in a widescreen format, even with spherical optics, caused a subtle, positive difference in the atmosphere on-set. "Psychologically, everyone is happier when you're shooting in widescreen, except maybe the producer!" muses Stapleton. "Among the camera crew, there's always the feeling of 'Now we're talking cinema!' With 1.85, you're usually thinking, 'This is more like TV — domestic drama, people endlessly talking,' and it is not about photography at all. If you have a cinematic script, there's always the temptation to shoot in widescreen."

Hallström notes that he and the film's producer, Richard Gladstein, have long been fans of the widescreen format's "big movie" feel. The soft-spoken director admits, however, that he was initially "reluctant to go against Oliver's preference for 1.85, because I respect his work so much."

Nevertheless, the widescreen format works perfectly for *The Cider House Rules*. Stapleton thinks this success may have something to do with the large number of people who are often onscreen at one time; Hallström believes it is because of the spectacular New England scenery. "Each shot just seemed to have the right proportions," Hallström recalls, summing up the issue.

Since the film was a Miramax production, Stapleton knew that the release prints would be made on the less-costly Fuji F-CP 3519 print stock. He therefore decided to stick with Fuji throughout the production, using the firm's Super F 250T 8551 and 250D 8561 production stocks. The cinematographer shot with his personal Moviecam Compact camera and a rented set of Cooke S4 lenses. "I adjusted my shooting to work with the Fuji release stock, which I thought was just fine," Stapleton says.

One of the most notable visual aspects of *The Cider House Rules* is the beauty of the outdoor skies, which are appropriately spectacular in some scenes and subtly evocative in others. According to Stapleton, capturing such photogenic skies requires a combination of planning, flexibility and luck. "If the director and assistant director are on your side, you can adjust what you shoot first according to the weather," he points out. "That way, you can do your wide shots when the sky is at its best. Of course, you also try to plan well." To avoid overexposure, graduated ND filters were used whenever the sky was prominent in the frame.

In one scene involving the graveyard burial of an orphan, a tremendously colorful, cloudy sky in the background serves to heighten the intense mood. "I had asked the production designer to set up the graveyard so that we would be shooting into the sunset," Stapleton recalls. "We got lucky, because the clouds were very interesting late in the day. That is about all you can do — plan things out and then turn up and hope to be intelligent about the weather. If you're lucky, it will play into your hands."

In one key case, the weather perfectly suited the drama, but not the production. During a scene in which Homer Wells and Candy Kendall (Theron) confront a crisis in their precarious relationship, the duo are shown sitting on a loosely-moored dock near the Kendall family lobstering business, where they are enveloped in pale gray, foggy light. "The weather was wonderful for that sad scene, visually ideal," Stapleton notes. "In real life, it was cold and damp and horrid."

To further accentuate the characters' insecurity, Stapleton placed the camera in one of the small boats and deliberately circled the actors to reveal both their situation and their surroundings. "The concept really came from the notion of two people cast adrift, because at that point in the movie, they are a bit lost and unsure of

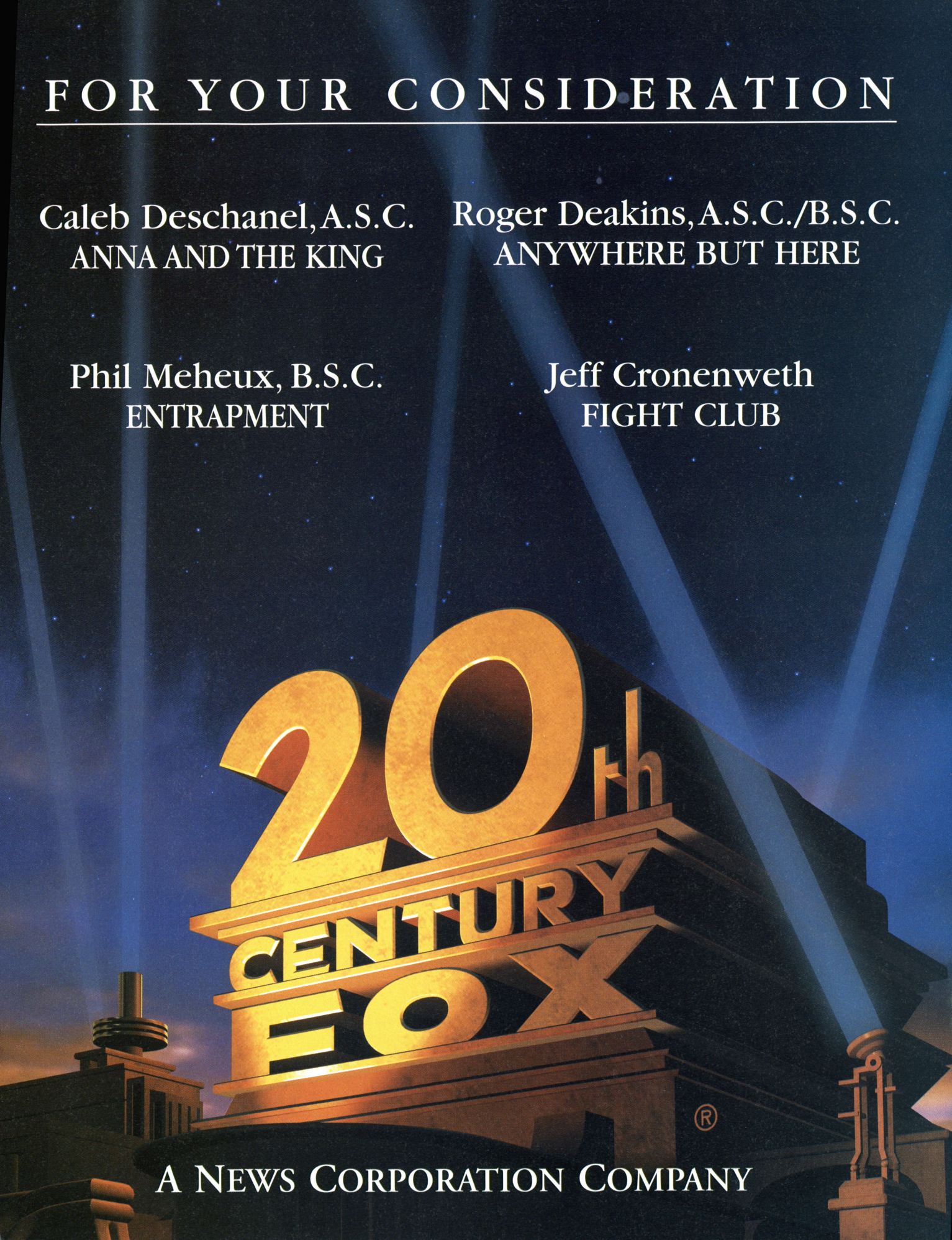
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Africa. "The South African light that bounces off the golden, sandy ground looks wonderful on dark-skinned actors," he notes.

When that approach wasn't used, the crew often provided fill with fixtures cheekily dubbed OLGAs or OLSAs by his crew. "I'm told that OLGA stands for 'Oliver's Low Gold Ambient' and OLSA is 'Oliver's Low Silver Ambient,'" Stapleton explains with a chuckle. "These are basically sticks of lumber with a specially baffled, self-masking reflector at one end; on the other end is a spigot, onto which we place a light, such as a 300W lamp. The units are placed on the floor near the camera and they make the actor's eyes sparkle. They're also great in low-light situations where you need some fill but don't want it to spill all over the sets."

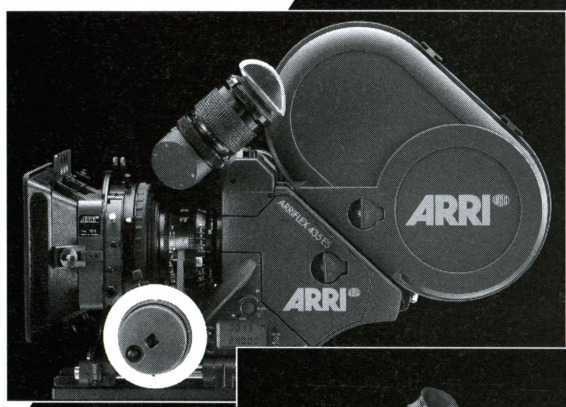
Hallström says that his first collaboration with Stapleton proved to be exceptional. "Oliver came up with wonderful visual ideas throughout the film, a flow of ideas that I just loved," the director enthuses. "For example, he helped to redesign a montage sequence [in which Dr. Larch schemes to convince Wells to return to the orphanage]. I had envisioned the sequence as being static and kind of confessional, but Oliver mapped it out differently with camera moves. The moves were classy and supportive of the story, without being intrusive or flashy. Oliver was constantly solving scene problems, devising blocking ideas that I would steal and run with. He is organized, and I tend to thrive on chaos. It was a great collaboration."

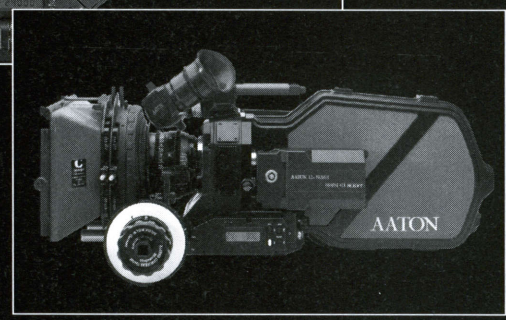
The Idiots Plays By Von Trier's Rules

by Patricia Thomson

Film scholars would have a field day psychoanalyzing Danish director Lars von Trier, who is as noted for his personal phobias as for his films (*Zentropa, The Kingdom, Breaking the Waves;* see coverage of the latter in *AC* Dec. 1996). To explain Dogma '95 — the provocative, anti-status-quo production rules that he and director Thomas Vinterberg drew up in 1995 and used for

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Right: Seeking psychic freedom, a group of "idiots" bare their souls — and lots more. Below: One man hopes that crazy behavior will lead him to the tree of knowledge.



Vinterberg's *The Celebration* and von Trier's latest project, the digital video feature *The Idiots* — one might turn to von Trier's childhood: his permissive parents, the hippie commune in which he was raised, the absence of restrictions. "Complete freedom gives you a lot of anxiety, that's for sure," von Trier has avowed. Setting up rules can curb that anxiety, taming the chaos.

Scholars might also try to explain Dogma '95 by pointing to von Trier's admission that he had "an almost fetishistic attraction to film technology" in his early years. Dogma '95 could conceivably represent the filmmaker's attempt to break away from a preoccupation with lenses, lights, gels, dollies and tour-de-force camera moves (think of the elaborate, vertiginous shot down the spiral staircase in *Zentropa*, for instance). As von Trier has proclaimed, "The Dogma rules are very much designed for me not to do what I thought I had been doing for a long time, where I had reached a point and I couldn't get any further."

Longtime associate Jesper Jargil, who attended the Danish Film School with von Trier, recalls his precocious classmate setting up the lighting for an assignment in the studio space the two shared. "He had lit a set entirely with contradictory colors," Jargil says with a laugh. "It was like looking at a color negative!" On that subject, von Trier has noted, "It's been very important for me how the colors of a film look, so it's a great relief to have a rule saying, 'You can't do anything about it.'"

Whatever the private impetus behind Dogma '95 may be, its rules (or "10 Vows of Chastity," reprinted in *AC* May '99) are now out in the public realm, and spreading like a virus. Though *Variety* initially dismissed Dogma '95 as "a gimmick with a fast-expiring shelf-life," events have taken a different turn. At the Cannes Film Festival this year, von Trier's production company, Zentropa Entertainment, announced that it will co-produce another 16 films in accordance with the Dogma '95 rules, with projects already in motion in Scandinavia, England, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United States.

Central to Dogma '95 are rules that directly impact cinematographers. The camera must be handheld. Shooting must be done on location. No artificial lights or props are permitted. Sound must never be produced apart from picture. Optical work and filters are prohibited. Only color film is allowed. The final format must be Academy 35mm.

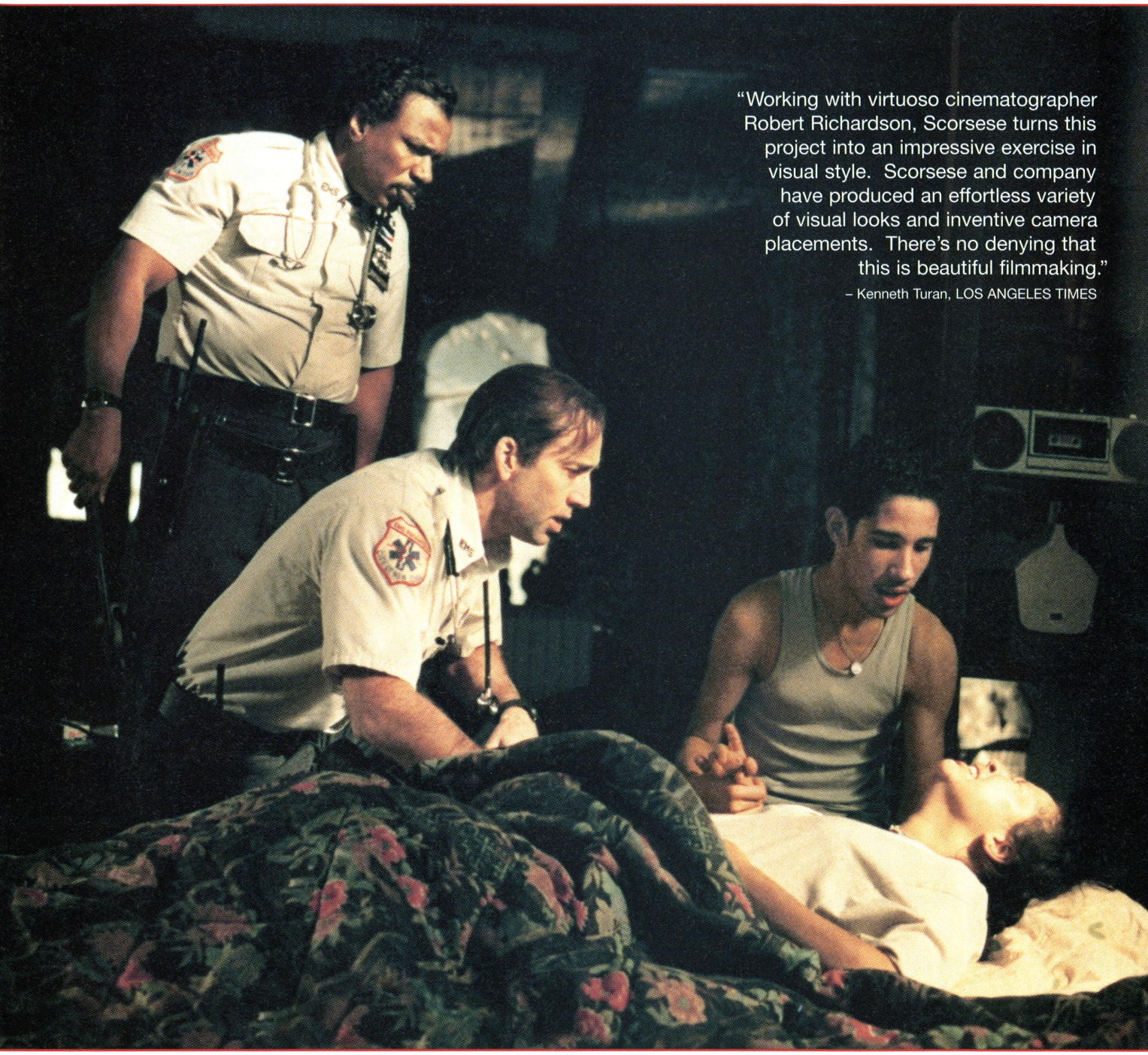
While Dogma '95 doesn't specify a film's originating format, both Vinterberg and von Trier have recently opted for digital video; Vinterberg shot with the palm-sized Sony PC-7, while von Trier opted to use the slightly larger Sony VX-1000 Digital Handycam, which is considered to have better sharpness and high color rendition. In the spirit of Dogma '95, von Trier allowed use of only the lens that comes with the camera — a 10:1 zoom (5.9-59mm).

The idea behind the austere Vows of Chastity is to get rid of "cosmeticized" cinema and put the emphasis back on story and character. In theory, these rules simplify production. As von Trier has explained in an interview on the Dogma '95 website (www.dogme95.dk), "At one level, the Dogma rules emerged from a desire to submit to the authority and the rules I was never given in my humanistic,



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A mad genius or simply mad? Filmmaker Lars von Trier shoulders a Sony DV camera while seeking his next shot.

cultural-leftist upbringing; at another level, they express the desire to make something quite simple. In a normal film production, you are hampered by having to make decisions about and control an infinite number of things, such as filters and colors. The Dogma rules basically say that you mustn't do any of that."

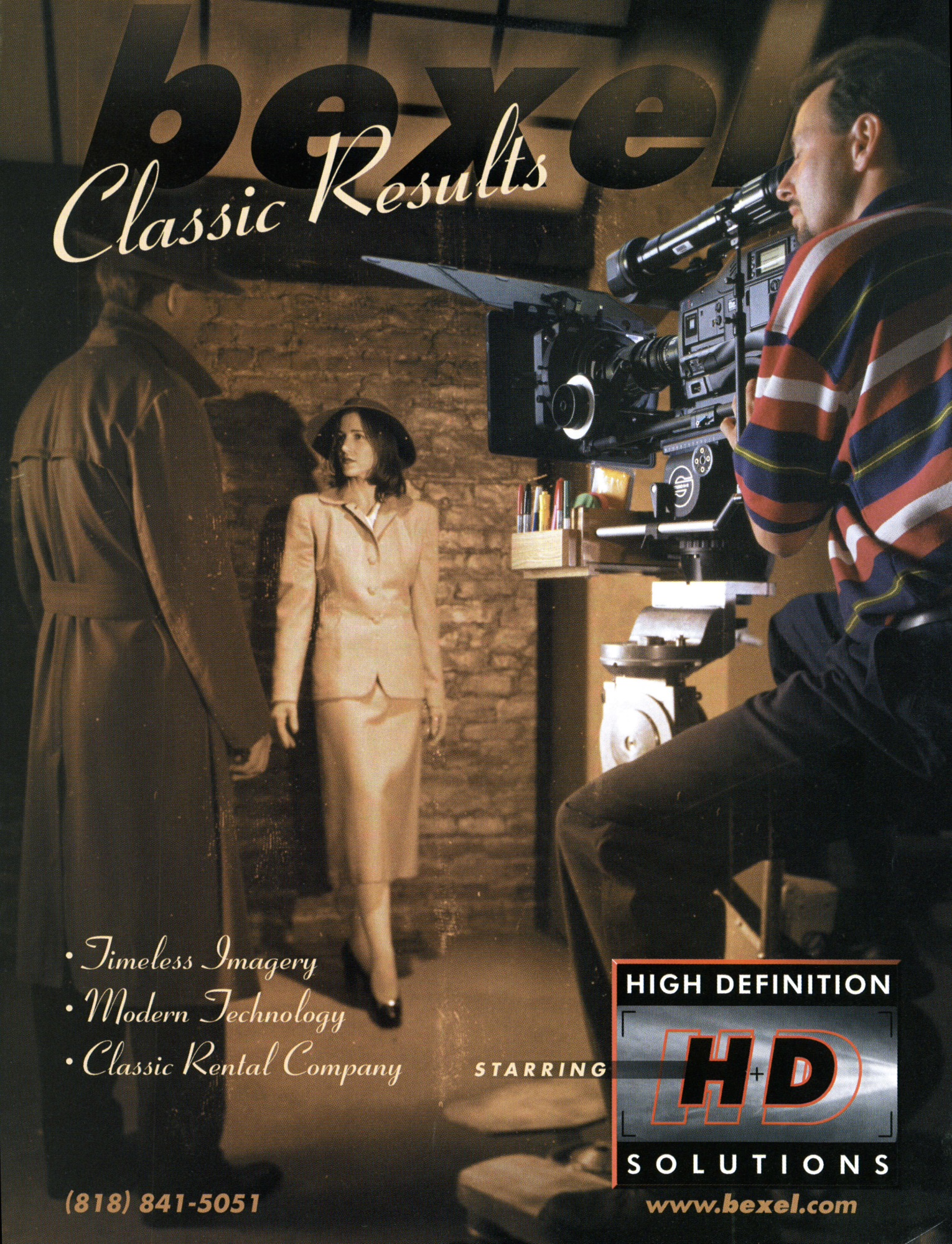
Writing rules that forbid the following of rules and allow one to give up control is one of the many paradoxes inherent to Dogma '95. Rules and control are also a central theme of von Trier's film *The Idiots*, which was conceived around the same time as the Dogma '95 manifesto. Shot in 1998, it has lingered on the shelf for a time, partially because of its unusual content. (A limited U.S. release through USA Films is still pending.)

The film's story involves a group of people who come together in a suburban house to explore their own limits and society's limits by practicing idiocy — wallowing in excessive feelings of curiosity, aggression and primitive sexuality. Above all, they "spazz" — drool, twitch, and droop like a rag doll — and must face a "test" of spazzing in public before people who are important to them. According to von Trier, the film "juggles with the concept of normalcy, with the way we ought to and ought not to behave."

Von Trier shot the majority of the film himself, and there's some irony in this, given the director's ambition to shed his obsession with technical details. As Jargil wryly notes, "This new DV technique is really *the* way of having control of a project — to be holding the camera and doing the framing yourself."

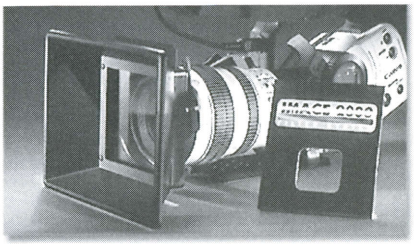
Jargil was one of three other camera operators on the production (including Casper Holm and Kristoffer Nyholm), who shot a combined 130 hours of material. While von Trier's footage makes up a good 85 percent of the final cut, the director didn't go into the project intending to spend so much time behind the camera. "Lars didn't know that he'd feel comfortable shooting it himself," says Jargil, who also acted as assistant director and got permission to shoot a "making of" film about *The Idiots*, appropriately titled *The Humiliated*. "He'd always been arguing with photographers. When he did *Breaking the Waves*, he would go over while [cinematographer Robby Müller, BVK, NSC] was standing there shooting and push him, so that the framing would move. Lars likes mistakes. It's funny, because at the same time he wants to control everything. But the Dogma '95 rules are also there to honor mistakes."

Above all, says Jargil, "the Dogma '95 rules are really there for the actors — to [allow them to] indulge and get close to their characters." As in *The*


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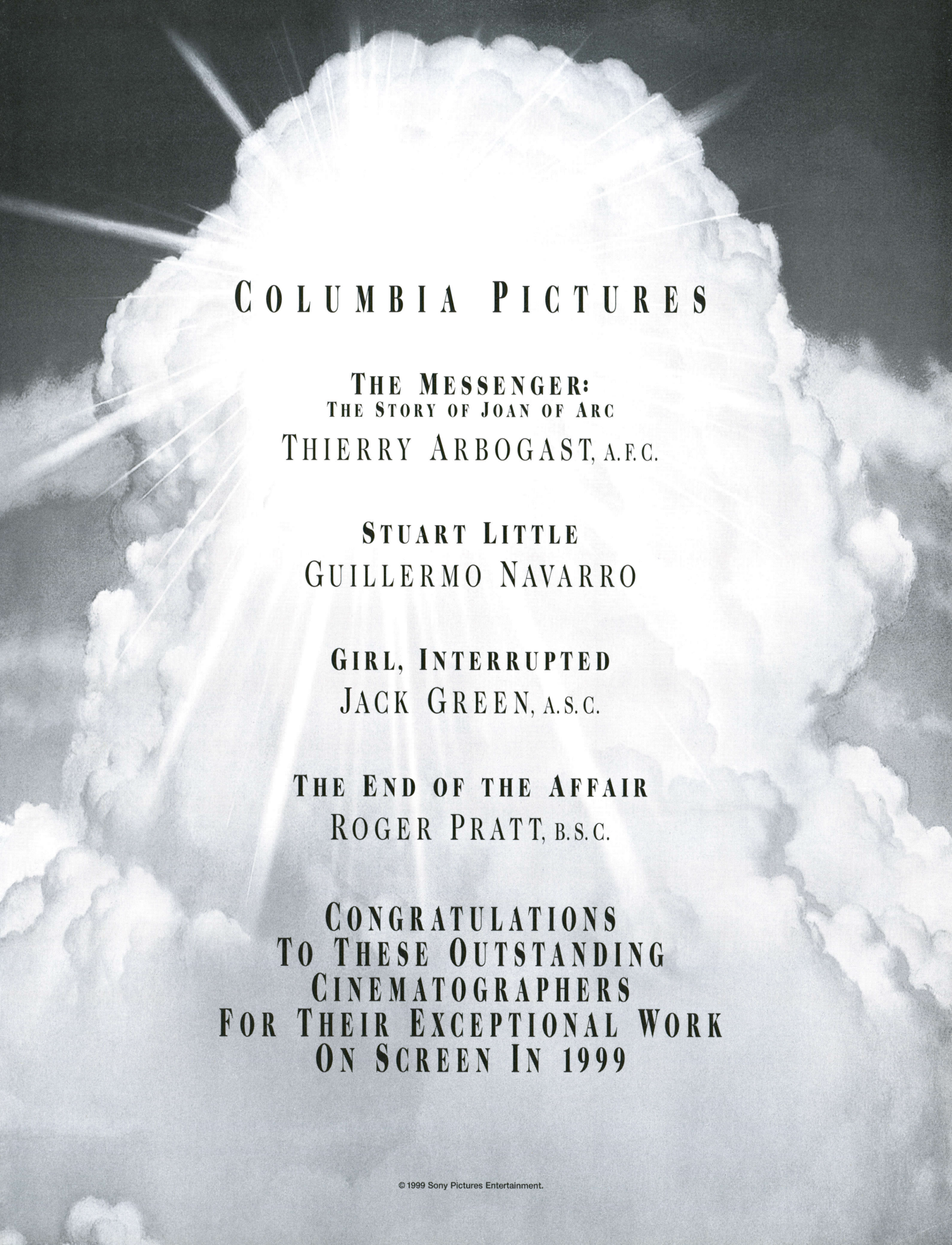
Kingdom, the actors in *The Idiots* had no marks to hit, nor even generalized blocking. It was the camera operators' responsibility to follow their movements. What's more, von Trier encouraged the actors to improvise dialogue — a luxury made possible by the economy of DV. "The whole process with DV cameras encourages you to shoot, rather than stop and discuss an idea with actors," Jargil says.

While Dogma '95 was set up to simplify production, the reality is somewhat different. Like leaving behind a first marriage only to find a whole new set of problems with a second, shooting a film according to the Dogma rules offers its own set of challenges.

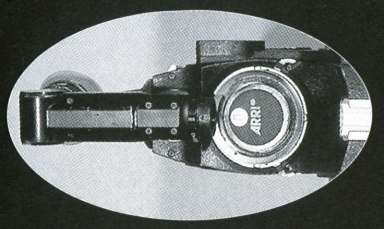
Take the prohibition against lighting and sets. This means that the production team must be doubly careful when scouting locations, and bring the actors to the light, rather than vice-versa. The VX-1000 functions well in low-light situations (its maximum aperture is f1.6-2.1), as do many of the DV cameras. In fact, Jargil complains that the digital cameras can be *too* sensitive — a quality von Trier intentionally plays up. One example from *The Idiots* is a restaurant scene with daylight streaming through the windows. "It's very badly shot, in a way, because we used the automatic measuring system in the camera, so when we'd shoot towards the window, you'd have a very dark [interior] scene," says Jargil. However, according to Dogma '95, "if you have scenes where you're too dark or too light, you're not allowed to balance them [in post]."

Not everyone played by von Trier's rules on *The Idiots,* however. The first prints out of the lab reflected the light imbalance, "but when you look at the 10th print, you'll see that filters have been used to some effect," Jargil says. "That was done by the man who does all of the coloring in the laboratory; each time he makes a print, he makes a little change, because otherwise he would hate his job. Given the number of prints made today, I think the image looks all right in the end."

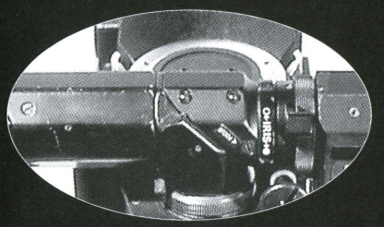
Then there's the rule that no props can be brought in. While this wouldn't seem to affect the cinematography, Murphy's Law holds sway. As a case in point, Jargil recounts the story of the forbidden extension cord. The plan was to shoot a scene in which a character goes berserk and runs after a car, and is then caught by his more rational peers and tied up. "That scene was going to be shot in an attic. The light up there would have been beautiful, but we were an hour and a half behind schedule, so there wasn't sufficient light," Jargil recalls. "The crew scouted the attic and found a lamp, but there was no electrical socket.


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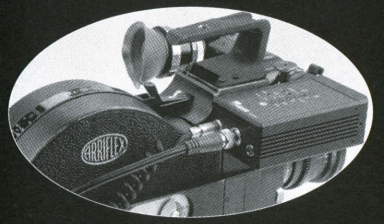
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The sound engineer remembered that he had an extension cord in his car, so he fetched it and they rigged up the light.

"Everything was fine — we had a real lamp from the house, so the situation was Dogma-right — except for the cord. But when Lars arrived and saw it, he demanded, *'What's this cord doing here?'* The sound engineer almost blushed, and they had to remove it. Because there was no other cord in the house, one of the actors had to go to the neighbors' to ask them if they had a spare cord that we could borrow."

Ultimately, the attic scene was cut. "It may sound like a stupid thing to waste half an hour of everybody's time just to get the right kind of cord that you don't even see in the picture," Jargil admits. "But that's part of the rules. If you have rules, you follow them." He explains his point with a metaphor: "If we were playing a game of cards, there wouldn't be any game if we didn't stick to the rules. Afterwards, we could change them. But while you're in the game, you take them seriously. Otherwise it's just stupid."

Even von Trier has admitted that he underestimated the challenges that Dogma '95 conjures up. "A load of cinematic effects that otherwise seem easy or cheap suddenly become difficult again," he said in a recent interview. "During shooting, it turned out that the Dogma '95 rule that sound and picture must not be produced separately was very interesting. This means we often edited according to the sound instead of the picture, because if you required a particular sound or cue, you had to use the picture that accompanied it; [this] has meant weirder pictures and peculiar differences in the intended result between the sound and picture sides."

Weird or not, Jargil says of *The Idiots*, "Ten years from now, we'll see it as a classic." Time will tell, of course. Meanwhile, two things are certain. The first is that *The Idiots* gave von Trier enough confidence to pick up the camera again for his next film, the non-Dogma '95 musical *Dancer in the Dark*. Secondly, the fact that a major director like von Trier completely shot a feature on DV will further enhance that format's viability in the eyes of distributors and theater owners.

Celebrating Oversized Images

The Large Format Cinema Association recently confirmed plans to stage their LFCA 2000 Conference and Large-Format Film Festival at the California ScienCenter in Los Angeles on May 17-20.

The LFCA is a nonprofit, worldwide trade association founded in 1996 to address professional issues and needs of all players and cinematic formats in special format and special venue moviemaking, and to encourage growth and experimentation in the industry. The organization is open to all members of the international large-format film industry, including filmmakers, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, theaters and their support industry, as well as film students, film studios, theme parks and the press.

LFCA 2000 marks the association's fourth annual conference and third annual Large-Format Film Festival, as well as the third consecutive year in which the event has taken place in L.A. New board member and LFCA Conference Chair Paul Giguere of MegaSystems will build a committee of industry notables to contribute to organization, outreach, programming and content for the annual industry gathering. "The priority is for the conference to reflect and help realize the mission of LFCA, which is primarily the open exchange of information and the growth of the industry in its various markets of commercial cinema, institutional cinema and themed entertainment venues," he says.

Program highlights will include the festival itself, which will include new and classic works in 15-perf/70mm and 8-perf/70mm; a historical tribute to a pioneer of the large-format film industry; and a closing gala featuring a 5-perf/70mm Hollywood widescreen classic. The conference will feature panels, technical sessions, historical tributes, awards and a keynote

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BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
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THREE SEASONS

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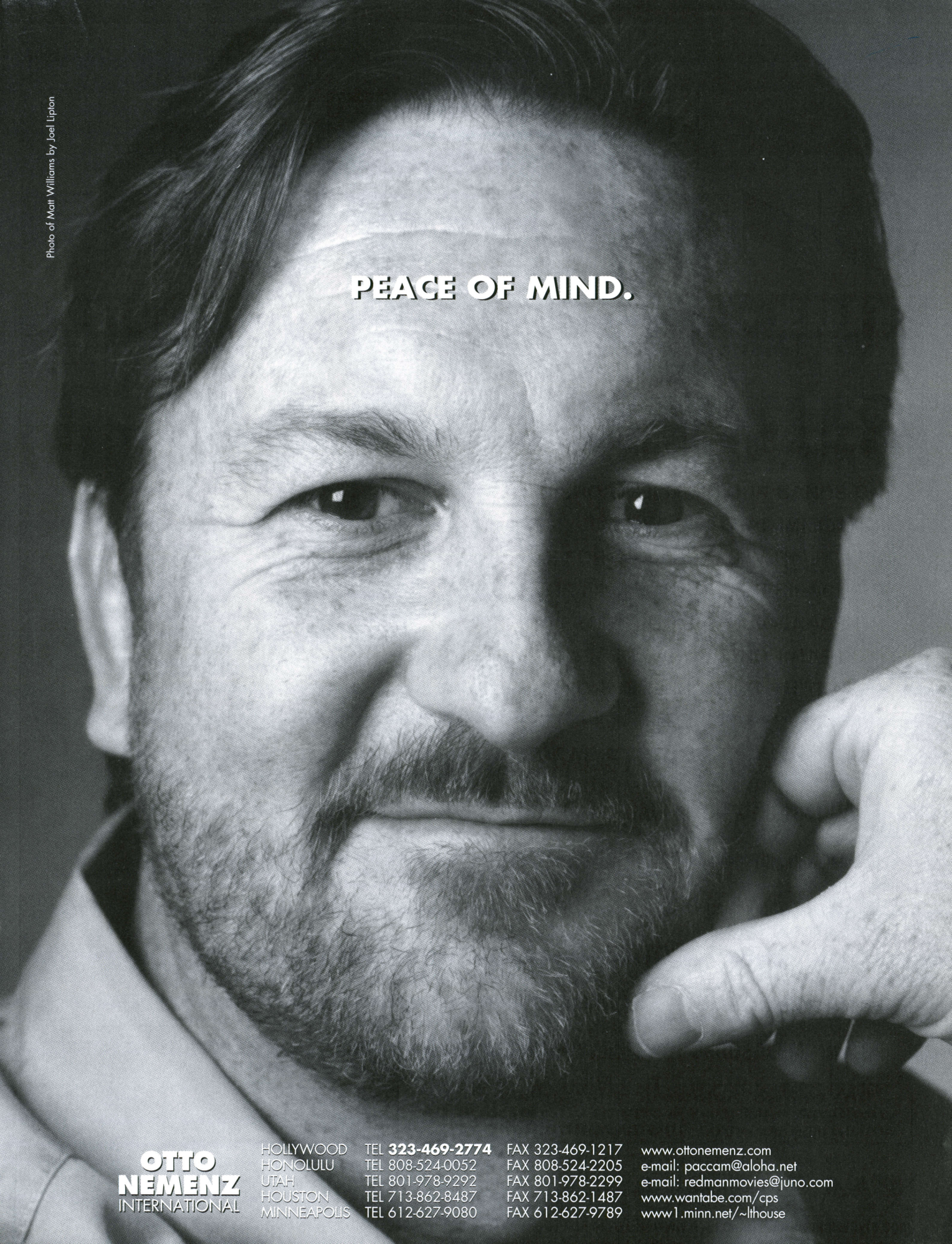
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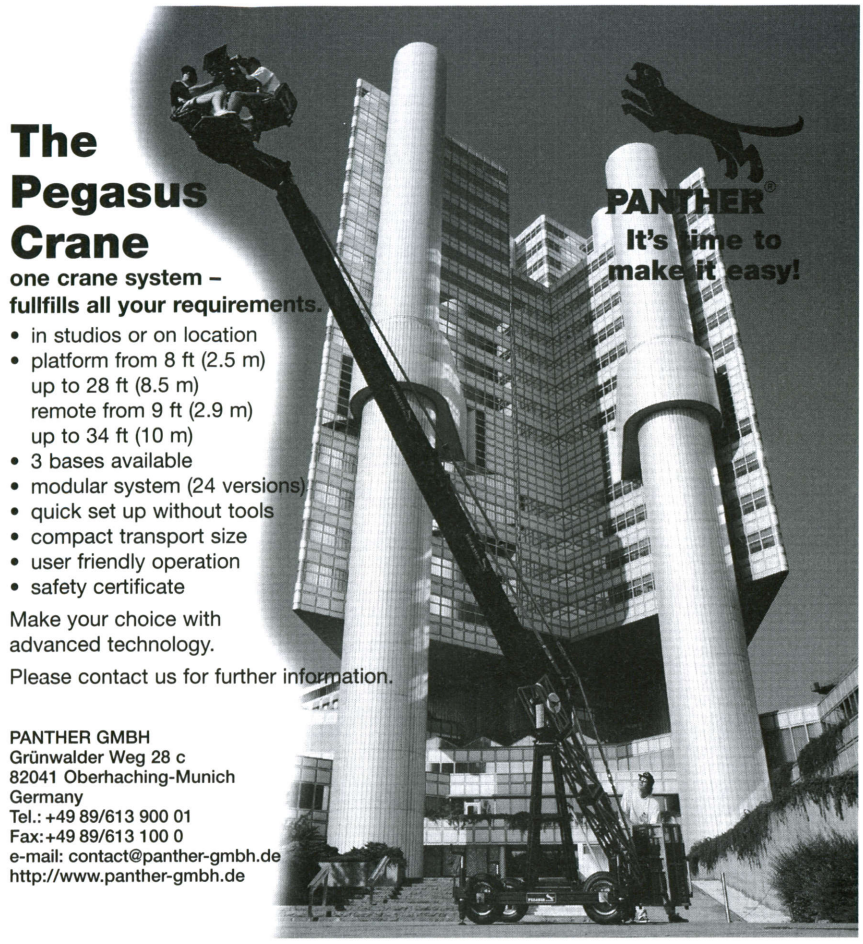
During these festivities, LFCA and Eastman Kodak Company will posthumously honor Noel Archambault with the first annual Kodak Vision Award for Large-Format Cinematography. The Vision Award recognizes imagination and leadership in filmmaking. It has been previously awarded to directors of photography, producers and other filmmakers whose work embodies artistic achievement and a commitment to excellence, and it is given to an individual who embodies the above values as judged by a jury of his/her professional peers.

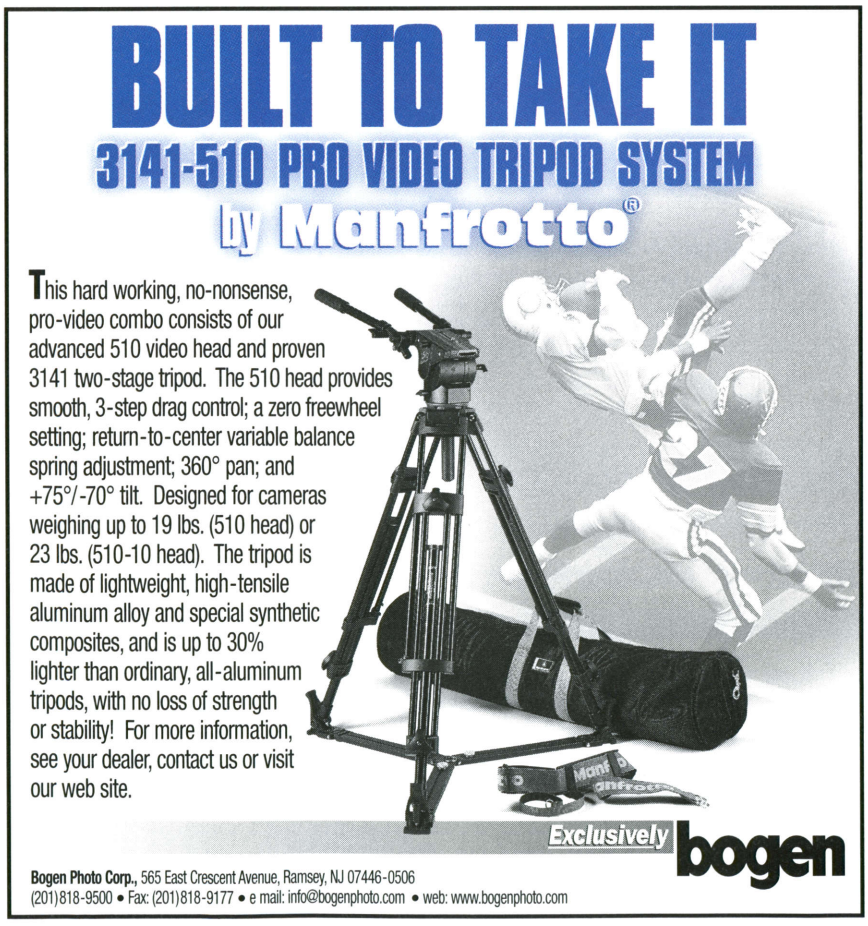
Archambault died in June of 1998, at the age of 37, in an aircraft crash while shooting aerial scenes of a volcano for *Galapagos: The Enchanted Voyage*, a 15-perf/70mm 3-D film that traces the famous voyage of Charles Darwin. An accomplished cameraman, stereographer, filmmaker and camera operator, Archambault was an expert in 15-perf/70mm 3-D processes. He worked on nearly every large-format 3-D film ever released, including *Transitions* (1986), *Echoes of the Sun* (1990), *The Last Buffalo* (1990), *Mark Twain's America* (1998) and the recent *T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous* (1998). Archambault also contributed to a number of acclaimed 2-D films, including *Rolling Stones: At the Max* (1991) and *Cosmic Voyage* (1996).

The LFCA Board of Directors voted unanimously to bestow the award on Archambault in recognition of his influential work in large-format cinematography. "Most of the large-format theaters being built today are 3-D theaters," says LFCA president Christopher Reyna. "But if it wasn't for Noel Archambault's achievements, there might not be any decent 3-D imageware available to show in those theaters. The current dynamic growth of our industry is in large part due to his contributions. It's a tragedy that his career was cut short. He was highly respected, and his influence on other cinematographers will long be felt."

Pre-registration for LFCA 2000 will begin in early spring. Those


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interested in attending or participating in the conference should telephone the LFCA Conference Headquarters at (310) 823-4901, send an e-mail to 110015.2160@compuserve.com, or visit the organization's website at www.lfca.org. Information on joining the LFCA can be obtained on the website or by telephoning the group's administrative offices in Stockton, California, at (209) 477-2726.

Howard Anderson Company Helps With History

The American Cinematheque, a non-profit cultural film organization that owns, operates and programs the renovated 1922 Egyptian Theater on Hollywood Boulevard (see "Wrap Shot" in *AC* Mar. '99), recently produced the permanent public attraction film *Forever Hollywood* in conjunction with Eastman Kodak. The 35mm short, screening daily, celebrates a century of filmmaking history in Hollywood.

Co-directed by chief *Variety* film critic Todd McCarthy and Arnold Glassman, and featuring narration by actress Sharon Stone, *Forever Hollywood* traces the rise of Hollywood from its beginnings as a farming suburb to its destiny as a glamorous movie Mecca — via interviews with the stars and filmmakers who helped shape this legacy. Producers, directors and actors such as Warren Beatty, Andre de Toth, Charlton Heston, Gloria Stuart, Angela Lansbury and many more offer their perspectives on the "biz."

In addition to Kodak's assistance on the million-dollar project, Panavision called in favors from several production and postproduction companies. One of these firms was the Howard Anderson Company, which lent its optical, title and effects talent to the endeavor.

Founded in 1927 by Howard Anderson, the Howard Anderson Company is truly a family affair. The firm has been handed down from father to son for three generations — and has long had strong ties to the ASC. Howard Anderson Jr., the former president of the North Hollywood title and optical house, is an ASC board member. His son,

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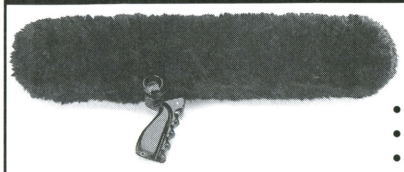
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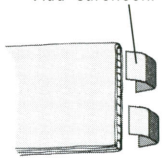
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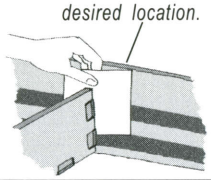
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Howard Anderson III, the current president and chief executive officer of the company, is also a member of the Society.

Forever Hollywood will screen permanently at the Egyptian Theater from Tuesday through Sunday at 11:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Calling All Indies

The Chicago Underground Film Festival is accepting applications for the Second Annual Chicago Underground Film Fund. Established in 1998, the fund is a completion-grant program to aid underground and independent film- and videomakers who share the festival's maverick spirit and defiant attitude. CUFF will award cash grants in the range of $500 to $2,000 to projects in the final stages of production that fulfill the festival's mission to promote works that push boundaries, defy commercial expectations and transcend the mainstream of independent filmmaking.



Filmmaker Nick Zedd is one of the past recipients of support from the Chicago Underground Film Fund.

"As the independent film world becomes increasingly homogenized, it has become difficult for truly cutting-edge work to find funding," says CUFF director Bryan Wendorf. "The Chicago Underground Film Fund exists to provide financial support for projects that aspire to be more than industry calling cards."

In 1999, CUFF awarded grants to

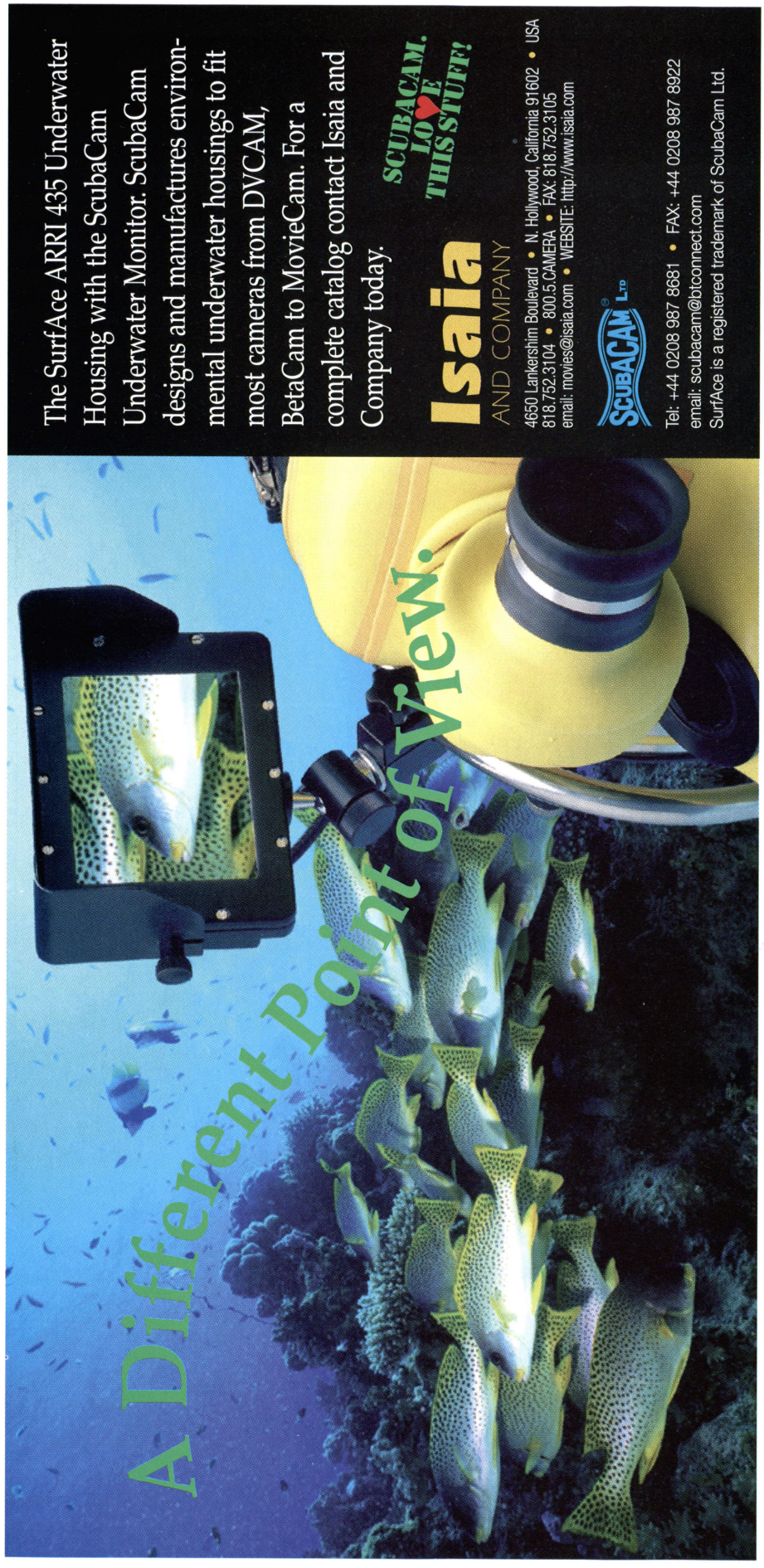
six projects it deemed worthy: *Ecstasy in Entropy* by New York underground figure Nick Zedd, *Swinger's Serenade* by Danny Plotnick, *Straightman* by Ben Berkowitz and Ben Redgrave, *Superstarlet A.D.* by John Michael McCarthy, *I'd Rather Be Dead Than Mellow — The Life and Art of Robert Williams* by Angi Glenn and Ana Wolovick, and *Live! Nude! Girls! UNITE!* by Julia Query.

After receiving his grant, *Straightman* director Ben Berkowitz remarked, "The CUFF grant was the first vote of confidence we got from anyone. The money helped us finish *Straightman*, but the recognition from our peers was equally as important to our film."

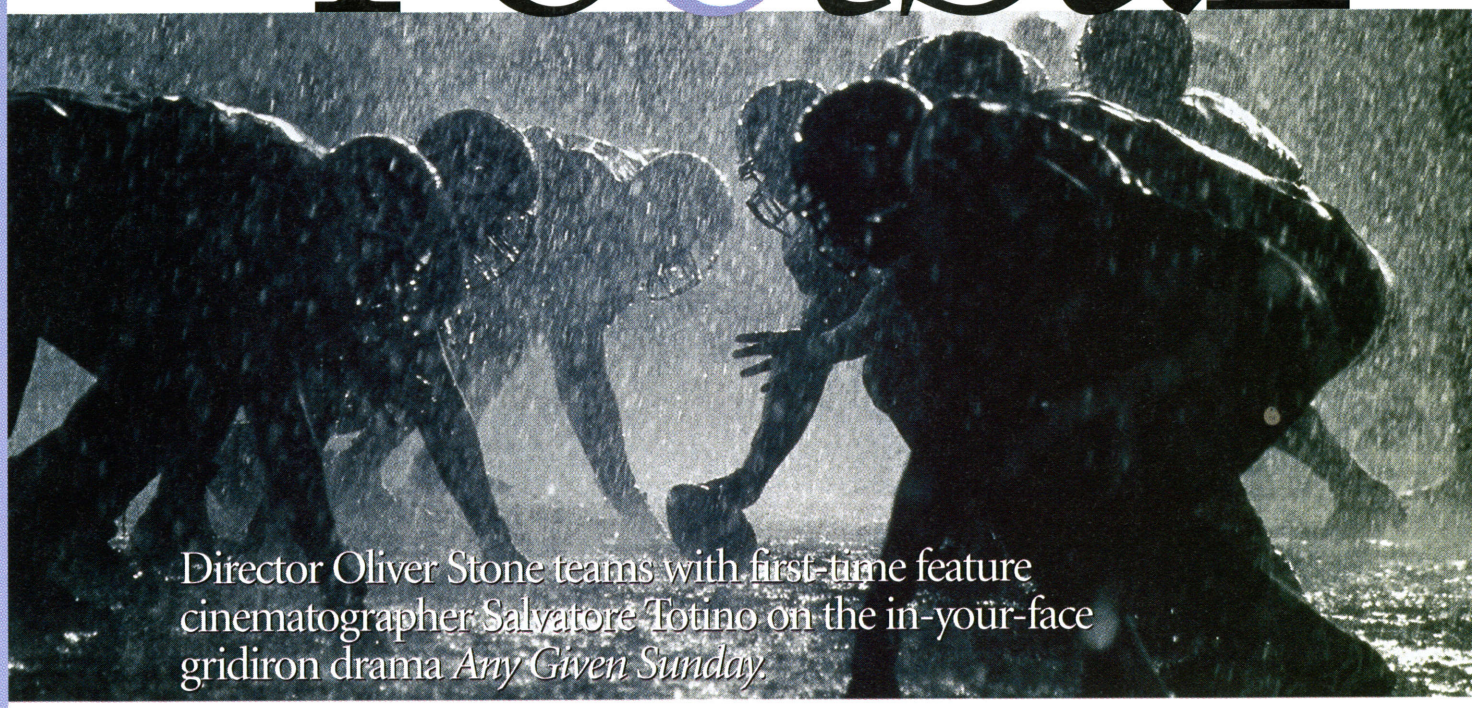
A San Francisco-based filmmaker who gained attention though his series of humorous Super 8 shorts, Danny Plotnick wrote, "The Chicago Underground Film Festival has continually proved to be a champion of outsider filmmakers — filmmakers whose work is fiercely independent and deliriously challenging, yet often overlooked due to the overwhelmingly tepid, play-it-safe consumer palate. The establishment of the festival's postproduction film fund is a major benefit for filmmakers with dirty fingernails. Their hard, cool cash certainly made the final days of working on my film less of a nightmare."

The fund is open to all film and video directors and producers. CUFF will consider proposals for any existing project, whether narrative, documentary or experimental, regardless of length, genre or final exhibition format. Film projects in 35mm, 16mm, Super 8 and all video formats are eligible.

The submission deadline for the fund is February 1, 2000, and awards will be announced on May 1, 2000. For grant applications or CUFF entry forms (the deadline is April 15), contact the festival by phoning (773) 327-FILM, e-mailing to info@cuff.org, or visiting the festival's website at www.cuff.org. ■



Smash-Mouth Football



Director Oliver Stone teams with first-time feature cinematographer Salvatore Totino on the in-your-face gridiron drama *Any Given Sunday.*

by Chris Pizzello

Unit photography by Robert Zuckerman

"Because I have lived through it, I know that playing in the NFL lives up to the childhood dreams of an eight-year-old boy, secretly clutching the golden figure of a Pop Warner championship trophy under his bedcovers as he drifts off to sleep. I also know that to play in the NFL, one must endure or succumb to pressures bent on compromising the soul in ways that would have made Daniel Webster shudder."
— Former-NFL player Tim Green, *The Dark Side of the Game: My Life in the NFL*

Like a rookie quarterback recalling his first snap from center in the pressure-packed atmosphere of an NFL season opener, cinematographer Salvatore Totino can identify the exact moment when the enormity of the challenge in front of him became clear. In the midst of a hectic, disorienting first day of principal photography on Totino's first feature film, *Any Given Sunday*, director Oliver Stone sidled up to his 35-year-old collaborator and slyly intoned, "Welcome to Vietnam."

Many months later, after the arduous shoot had finally wrapped and Stone had barricaded himself in his Venice, California, editing room to ready the film for its Christmas release, Totino could chuckle at the memory. "I didn't know what Oliver meant by that remark until later in the shoot, when I realized I had lost 18 pounds!"

Any Given Sunday marks the first time since Stone's 1981 horror film *The Hand* that the ever-provocative auteur has worked with a cinematographer other than the esteemed Robert Richardson, ASC. Stone's longtime creative partner had already committed to shooting Martin Scorsese's *Bringing Out the Dead* (*AC* Nov. 1999), forcing the director to go scouting for new behind-the-camera talent.

While sifting through scores of young cinematographers' showreels, Stone took notice of Totino's striking

Photos courtesy of Warner Bros.

music video and commercial work. Never one to shy away from taking a leap of faith in terms of either casting or crew decisions, Stone hired the Brooklyn native to shoot his $65 million football epic after just one meeting.

Totino entered the New York film world in the 1980s as a production assistant, but quickly became fascinated with the role of the cinematographer. "On one job, I met Paul Gaffney, a New York camera assistant, and I told him that I also wanted to be a camera assistant," he recalls. "He said to me, 'Okay, move those cases!' For two straight days he intentionally made me move cases back and forth, all day long. At the end of the job he said, 'I see you're serious!' On my days off, he started teaching me about cameras, and before long he was taking me on jobs."

Totino moved up to first camera assistant, and received his first break when he was asked by director Peter Care to shoot second-unit footage on a music video for the British band New Order. He soon became a sought-after director of photography in his own right, shooting a wide array of innovative commercials and music videos. He has shot ad campaigns for Jack Daniels, Nike, Jaguar, The Gap and H.I.S. Jeans, winning a Clio award for the latter. Among his most interesting music videos are U2's "Staring At The Sun," R.E.M.'s "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?," Bruce Springsteen's "Secret Garden," Soundgarden's "Spoonman," Live's "Lightning Crashes" and Radiohead's surreal "Fake Plastic Trees." (Both of the latter videos are part of the permanent archive collection at New York's Museum of Modern Art.)

Set in the near future, *Any Given Sunday* follows the fictional Miami Sharks franchise through a tension-packed season of intrasquad intrigue. The Sharks' veteran quarterback, Cap Rooney (Dennis Quaid), has suffered a serious midseason injury, leaving the offense in the hands of cocky third-stringer Willie Beamen (Jamie Foxx). After a shaky start, Beamen shocks both fans and management by rejuvenating the previously moribund team. Before long, however, the me-first style of "Steamin' Beamen" leads him into clashes with both teammates and the Sharks' old-school head coach, Tony D'Amato (Al Pacino). To make matters worse, the principled D'Amato is feeling the squeeze from the Sharks' young, ambitious, take-no-prisoners president and co-owner (Cameron Diaz). In chronicling the chasm between D'Amato's seemingly archaic ideals of loyalty and teamwork and the modern game's increasingly cutthroat atmosphere, Stone has fashioned an apt metaphor for the ever-present tension between American individualism and the





Opposite page: Offensive and defensive linemen square off in a driving rainstorm. In their attempt to infuse the film with overtones of trench warfare, director Oliver Stone and cameraman Salvatore Totino went so far as to use techniques employed by Steven Spielberg and Janusz Kaminski, ASC on the World War II drama *Saving Private Ryan*. This page, top: Injured Sharks quarterback Cap Rooney (Dennis Quaid) and his replacement, Willie Beamen (Jamie Foxx) study the team's defense with coach Tony D'Amato (Al Pacino). This page, bottom: Stone and Totino discuss their game plan.

Smash-Mouth Football



Above: A weatherproofed camera is brought into play. Below: A low angle captures the Sharks marching toward the line of scrimmage in Texas Stadium. Stone says he sought to lend the film an epic feel reminscent of classic Hollywood films such as *Ben-Hur.*

greater good.

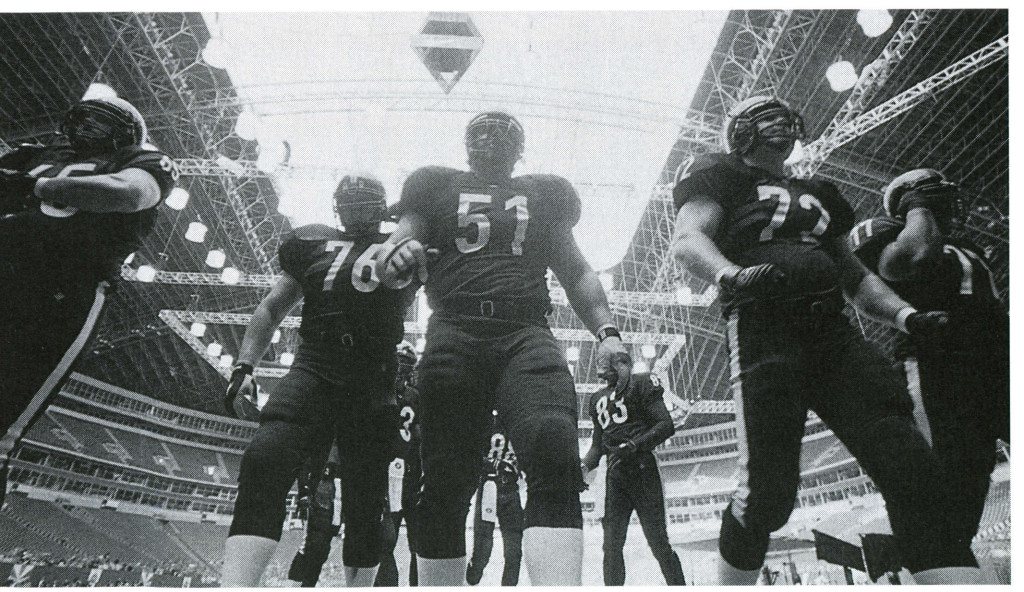
The film's punishing 65-day production schedule was highlighted by five different staged football games in Miami's storied Orange Bowl and the newer Pro Player Stadium, as well as Texas Stadium in Dallas. The enormity of the shoots required a sprawling second unit to shoot scenes involving thousands of extras on the sidelines and in the crowd. "It was a very tough, difficult, agonizing process, as well as a logistical nightmare," Totino admits. "I just saw the trailer last night, which started to make the whole experience a bit more real for me. It was a huge project, and we had great support from Warner Bros. and the film's producer, Clayton Townsend. I had a full-blown second unit, but Oliver initially kept them with our first unit, because all of the footage has to fit and marry together on a film of this size."

During the prep stage, Totino, who calls himself a "casual" football fan, made a conscious decision to avoid cross-referencing other sports-themed films. "I didn't want any other film to sway or persuade my thinking," he says. "I also wanted to stay away from Oliver's previous work. I'm a very big fan of his films, and I think Bob Richardson is an incredible cameraman — a genius. He's come up with his own style, and I thought it was very important for me not to mimic that. That's not who I am or where I think the film should have gone. But I did watch *Raging Bull* a lot, because that film evokes a certain feeling, and I think a lot of *Any Given Sunday* is about feelings."

Totino reports that Stone encouraged this intuitive attitude toward the subject matter during preproduction. "Some directors are more verbal about their visual ideas, but Oliver tries to bring you into an *experience*," Totino describes. "Going down to Miami and spending time with him in preproduction brought out a certain feeling. He kept on saying, 'This is Miami, it's *sun*, it's *warm*, it's *hot*.' The reality of our lives before and during the film were brought *into* the film."

In order to observe some actual gridiron action and capture crowd footage for inserts, Stone and Totino brought a camera crew to a Dallas Cowboys game at Texas Stadium last December. "The real game was actually much slower than you would think," Totino attests. "I was frustrated being on the sidelines with only certain lenses and a minimum of movement. I thought it was important to bring the viewer onto the field by getting the camera *inside* the plays, which is very difficult. You have 22 men crashing into each other, which is a huge amount of weight being thrown around. It's hard to get the camera in places where you can make interesting shots."

To bring the game's ground-war ferocity to the fore, the filmmakers employed a variety of "trick plays" in their shooting strategy. A small, modified Arriflex IIC dubbed the "Ratcam" (built by Steadicam operator Jimmy Muro) could be



used either handheld or on a small pole to capture the man-to-man skirmishes along the line of scrimmage. The Ratcam allowed Totino to practice his own form of method cinematography when he donned a helmet one day to capture the unnerving point of view of a quarterback about to be mauled by blitzing linebackers. "We used a few actual NFL players — like Lawrence Taylor and Keyshawn Johnson — on the shoot, as well as a lot of 'arena football' players," he says. "They all had a great attitude, and we got along really well. But they were afraid to hit me even on the second and third take, so I started cursing them out and calling their mothers names so they'd be a bit more aggressive!"

To enhance the film's pounding, you-are-there immediacy, the filmmakers also utilized Clairmont Camera's Image Shaker, which had lent stunning realism to the battle sequences in Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan.* Stone personally asked Spielberg how he'd captured the nerve-rattling quality of those scenes, and subsequently hired camera operator Mitch Dubin, who had worked with the device on *Ryan.* "The Image Shaker is a kind of plastic diaphragm that attaches to the front of the lens and gives the image the appearance that everything is shaking," Totino describes. "You can even control the degree of shakiness. It was great for running plays and quick little moments when we panned on and off the action. It just helped add to the speed and the violence, the strength and energy of the whole play."

Another device used to weave the film's crazy quilt of footage was a "bungee camera" that could zip up and down the yard marks of the football field. "We ran cables along the Orange Bowl from goal line to goal line, suspended from the stadium," Totino says. "We used prime lenses on an Arriflex 435 with a Panavision mount on the bungee. We were very limited in using it, but sometimes we could achieve a floating feeling over a player — a nice aspect of the bungee-cam. It's almost like a point-of-view shot, but without the jerkiness of the camera moving around on the operator's shoulder. The bungee-cam is smoother, and you can do quick pans with it."

To further fracture and distort the action, Totino also exploited some of the techniques he'd honed in his video work. "We played around with shutter speeds and camera speeds," he says. "We used some slow-motion, step-framing and even some strobing. I'm also a big fan of the streaking effect you get when you throw the shutter out of sync. I did the entire U2 'Staring at the Sun' video using that technique."

Totino's responsibilities were further complicated by Stone's exhaustive, multi-camera coverage of each play. "Most times we had six cameras on a setup, which makes it impossible to keep lighting continuity," Totino points out. "Some angles worked and some didn't. Sometimes I'd put up cameras and tell Oliver, 'You know, this shot might not work.' And he'd say, 'Okay, let's just go for it, I'll be happy with just 60 percent.' Then, of course, we'd be looking at dailies and he'd say, 'Well, how come you didn't get 100 percent?'

"Working with Oliver can be a huge psychological mindgame," Totino concedes with a laugh. "But to be honest, those mindgames added to the film. Some people aren't used to working that way, and they feel abused. But it's Oliver's way of getting the most he can out of his crew."

The cinematographer's foremost challenge on *Any Given Sunday* was to lend each of the film's five football games its own distinct look. Crucial to this goal was Totino's deci-



The self-assured Beamen takes a snap from center. In addition to professional actors, real-life NFL players were also cast to lend the film an extra dose of hard-hitting realism.

Smash-Mouth Football



A crew member captures an acrobatic tackle in an empty stadium. Other game situations required the careful arrangement of extras in the stands.

sion to employ both Kodak and Fuji stocks. "For instance, I shot with Fuji's 125 ASA 8531 film during the first half of the first home game at the Orange Bowl in Miami, which took place during the day. The second half turned into night, so I switched to Kodak's Vision 320T 5277. Game 2 was another Miami exterior daylight game, which I shot entirely with the Fuji 8531. Game 3 was an exterior at Pro Player Stadium in Miami, which was meant to stand in for a Los Angeles stadium, and I shot the whole game with Kodak [EXR] 5248.

An accomplished amateur Italian chef, Totino maintains that "cinematography is like cooking — you use the ingredients you need to make a given recipe. The fact that Kodak and Fuji stocks each have their own look added to the film. A lot of the locations have a different feeling, and I wasn't trying to keep a continuity of look throughout. Early on in production, I shot some Kodak Vision 200T 5274 at some nighttime locations, because I wanted more of a defined contrast. I also used 74 in the locker room at Pro Player Stadium for Game 3. I used 77 for most of the interiors and nights. I like to mix it up, and I used a lot of different stocks."

Totino says that his "kitchen instincts" were met with occasional bemusement from Stone. "At one point, I was explaining to Oliver the effect of mixing some colors with HMI light," he recalls with a chuckle. "Oliver said to me, 'Everything to you is like a pasta recipe! You put in a little paprika and some pepper, and you lay in a little salt…'"

In addition to their use of different stocks, Stone and Totino also mixed their lens strategy to add to each game's distinct character. "For some games, we went with longer lenses, which really added to the effect of the cameras inside the action," Totino says. "For other games, we used zoom lenses exclusively. The wide angles were a bit tough sometimes, because we had to worry about how full the stands were with extras. Long lenses really seemed to get in on the action and isolate the players. You really *felt* them. I shot mostly with Panavision cameras, but I used [Panavised] Arri 435s for the high-speed footage. I initially wanted to shoot with Arriflex Zeiss lenses, but the necessity of using the Panaflex 3:1 and 11:1 lenses, which are superior zooms, made us go that route. I'm generally not a fan of zooms at all. They have a lot of glass inside, and if you have a large focus pull, the frame size breathes a little. I'd rather take a few extra moments to change a lens than use a zoom, which is a lazy man's lens. They were pretty necessary for what we were doing, though."

In the interest of lending the game of football a more stylized, distinctive look, Totino chose to disregard strict realism in his lighting approach. "Generally, I didn't use any stadium light," he says. "I wanted to stay away from that look, because all football movies are shot that way. I think a lot of people involved with the film were apprehensive about that. They felt like, 'This isn't the way a football film is shot, it's not the way football is supposed to look.' But that's almost encouragement to me, because I'm ready to prove them wrong."

While available light — augmented with bleached muslin bounce for sideline shots — was employed for day games in the mostly sunny Miami stadiums, Totino felt free to indulge his experimental side for the night games. During the darkened second half of Game 1 at the Orange Bowl, Totino made the unconventional decision to light the stadium entirely from one side. "I thought it would be interesting, because everybody's so used to seeing football lit one way," he says. "I used 24 Dino lights, each of which contained 24 medium and spot bulbs. Part of the reason we lit from one side was so the viewer couldn't see more into the stands. In Game 4, which took place in the rain, I wanted the scenes backlit to pick up the moisture and make the game look very dramatic. The backlight for the rain game was the same as the one-sided lighting in Game 1, with the difference that we shot *into* the light, with very little fill."

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Right: Beamen rallies his troops in the huddle. Below: The cocky QB prepares for a handoff.

The conceit of setting the film in the near future was necessitated by the actions of the image-conscious National Football League, which decided at the last minute that it wouldn't sanction the film because of concerns about the warts-and-all script. Nevertheless, this key story alteration freed up the filmmakers to conceive of visual improvements to the way the game is currently presented. "[Production designer] Victor Kempster designed huge continuous advertising on the walls around the stadium," Totino details. "It was like one big lithograph or silkscreen. All of the different advertisements had a football theme, and they melted into each other around the stadium. It was so much more artistic than what you see now in NFL football. When the league sees this film, I think it will inspire some ideas. When we had to do a sideline shot, it was like putting somebody in front of a painted backdrop."

Not surprisingly, the filmmakers suffered their biggest location headaches at Texas Stadium in Dallas, the site of the film's climactic game. The oddly-designed domed stadium has an open top, resulting in brutally harsh contrasts of sun and shade during the daytime. "That dome was supposedly designed so that God can look down on his team," Totino chuckles. "It's a Dallas thing — the people there are very proud of the Cowboys. We joked about how we had to cover the hole so God couldn't watch what Oliver was doing!"



Smash-Mouth Football

Hoping to avoid the supremely frustrating scenario of collecting shots on the rare occasions during the day when the field was evenly lit, Totino and his crew decided to attempt the near-impossible: close the dome and light the vast interior themselves. "The hole looks a lot smaller on paper than it does in reality," he admits. "We didn't have much rigging time, but we got some structural engineers involved and decided to cover up the hole with baffled blacks so that air could come through. It was all supported on its own, rather than from the stadium. We were only able to close about a third of the stadium, and we erected two huge 100' by 150' lighting trusses, each of which held 98 space lights. We had a bit of daylight mixed with tungsten light, which gave the scenes a good look, but which was difficult to time. We shot in April, which was the only time of the year to avoid the huge light gap in there. Oliver also wanted to avoid shooting night scenes in Texas Stadium. It was really tough — we still had to work around when the sun was on the field, and as we got later into the month, the sun creeped onto the field even more. I avoided direct light at all costs. It was the only way for Oliver to have any continuity."

Totino was careful to visually delineate the Sharks' locker room, built by Kempster deep within the recesses of the old Orange Bowl, from the colder feel of the modern stadiums. "Victor came up with a very 1930s/'40s, industrial stadium interior," he details. "He left a slight sense that the locker room had been updated since that time, that maybe the lockers had been changed. The newer stadiums were very utilitarian, and I kept them that way using top-lit fluorescents. I felt it was important to give those stadiums a realistic feel. But the Sharks' locker room was different. I wanted it to weigh heavily on the audience. We had 3' incandescent tubes called Linestra lights along

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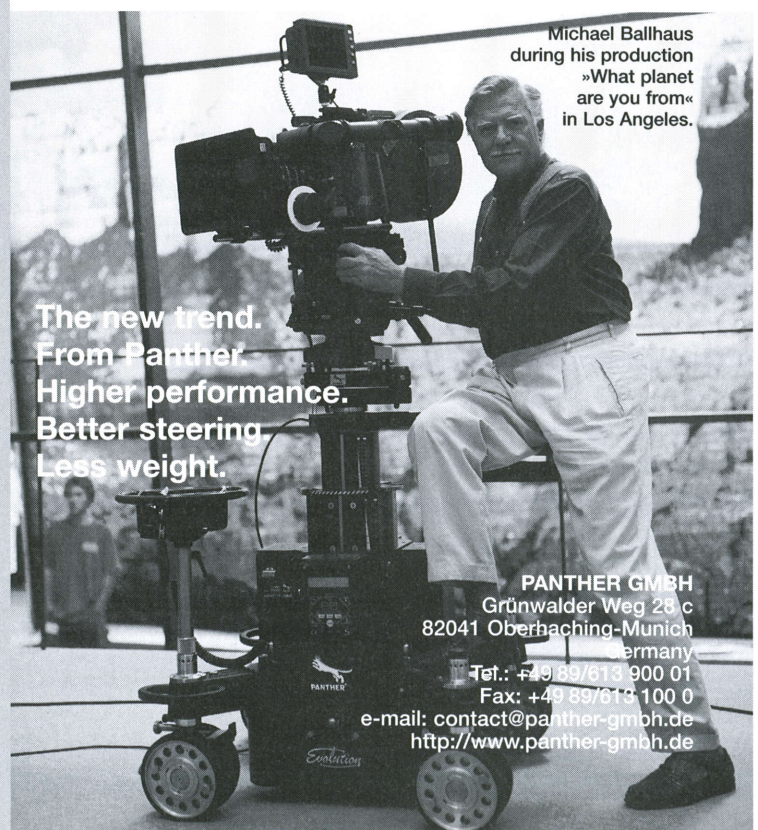
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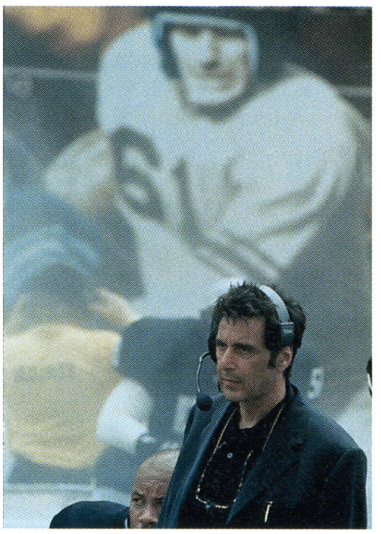
During conversation:

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Michael Ballhaus during his production »What planet are you from« in Los Angeles.

Smash-Mouth Football



A symbolic composition illustrates Coach D'Amato's link with tradition.

Technicolor in New York, who did our dailies. He worked very hard to keep up with the amount of film we sent through there, and some of its inconsistencies."

Many of these inconsistencies were the direct result of the extremely concentrated production schedule, which called for more than a few thorny night-for-day and day-for-night situations. "We actually used [Miami Dolphins quarterback] Dan Marino's house as [Sharks quarterback] Cap Rooney's house in the film," Totino says. "In one scene, D'Amato visits Rooney while he's barbequing with his kids. They take a walk around his veranda and end up next to a little lake at his house. We did a lot of wide shots, but then it got dark and we still had two or three pages of dialogue to do. The problem was making it match. I ended up using a huge construction crane with a 60' by 60' muslin hanging from the driveway above this pond; we bounced 18Ks up into it to create an ambient feeling. I used another 18K as the sun source, and other 18Ks and 4K Pars to add depth to the vegetation behind them. We were covering it from different angles, but that approach worked out pretty well."

Totino's resourcefulness was tested during the very first week of

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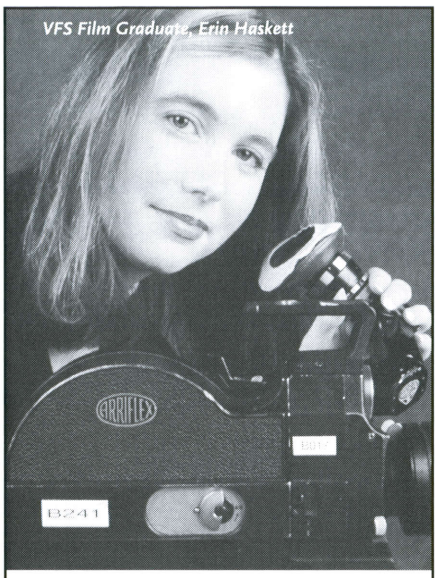


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Sleepy Hollow

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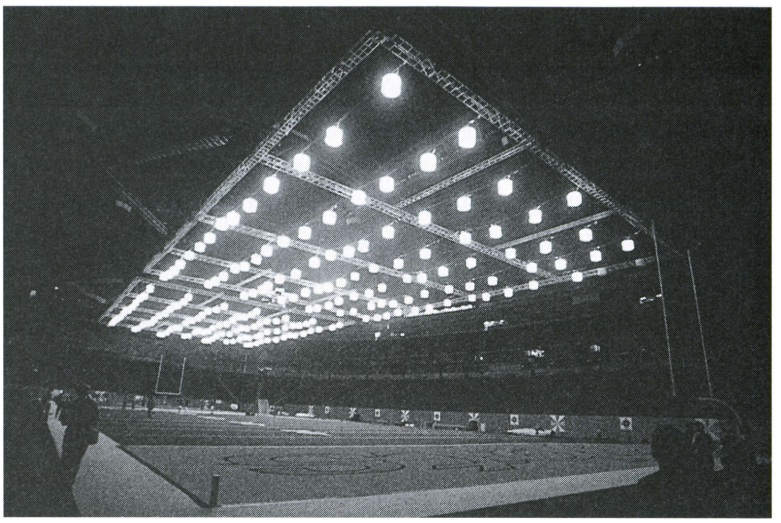
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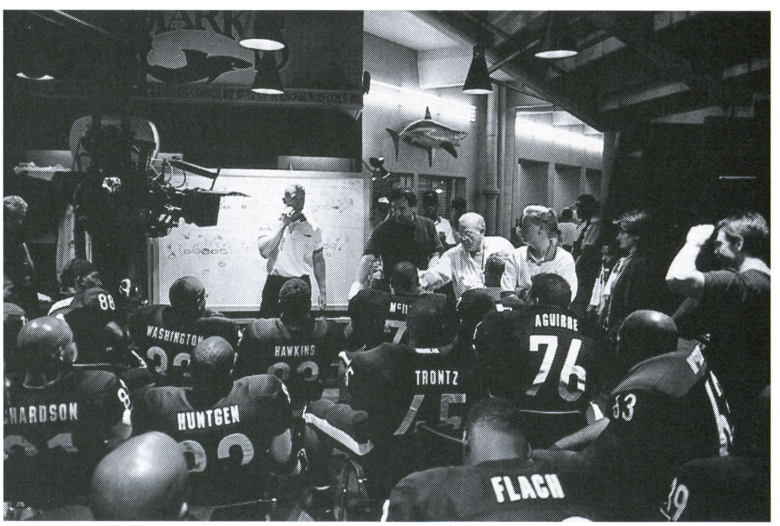


Above: An overhead lighting rig illuminates one of the film's football fields. Below: Totino sought to lend the Sharks' locker room a heavy, brooding ambience.

the walls and down the hallway. They're very warm and soft units, with a color temperature of about 2800° Kelvin. I mixed them with very heavy downlighting and some Kino Flos. It made for an interesting, heavy vibe. The Sharks also wore dark uniforms that really soaked up the light."

The Vince Lombardi-like character of Coach D'Amato is philosophically at odds with the "sharklike" individualists all around him, so Totino decided to augment that theme with a special lighting strategy for Al Pacino. "I wanted the audience to perhaps relate more to Al's character and feel a closeness to him," he says. "I think using warm light tends to bring viewers closer to a character. For a lot of Al's scenes I used just Linestra bulbs, which are already warm to begin with. Sometimes I'd add a ⅛ or ¼ CTO, depending on what light I was using.

"For D'Amato's home, we shot in a very interesting house in Fort Lauderdale that was built with old beams from an 18th-century factory in the Carolinas. It had a Frank Lloyd Wright feeling but with a modern, tropical vibe. There were windows everywhere that were very green. We couldn't really take out the windows, so it became a bit of an issue. I relied a lot on Joe Violante of



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JOHN TOLL, A.S.C.



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Cinematography World News

Updated: Friday September 10, 1999 at 9:44 AM PDT

Kodak Appoints New Director

Michel Golitzinsky has been selected as the new director of the Kodak Worldwide Emerging Filmmakers Program. The program, which began in 1998, was implemented to support students and film schools, as well as filmmakers early on in their careers. The program also works in cooperation with the Public Broadcasting System and the Directors Guild of America to create funding, scholarships, product grants, seminars and equipment to its participants.

Fri Sep 10, 1999, 9:44 AM PDT

Martin Coppen Garners MTV Award

The MTV Award for Best Cinematography in a Video was awarded to Martin Coppen for his work on Marilyn Manson's "The Dope Show." Other nominees included Julian Whatley for "Freak on a Leash" by Korn, Thomas Kloss for Madonna's "Beautiful Stranger," and Daniel Pearl for Will Smith's "Miami." Coppen was also nominated for Hole's "Malibu" video.

Thu Sep 9, 1999, 6:51 PM PDT

Production News Briefs

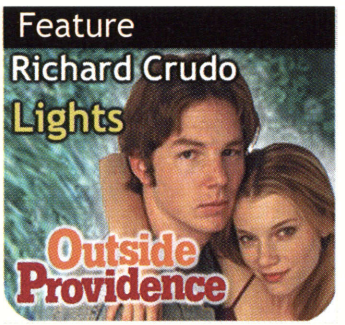
Jack Green, ASC ("Twister") is currently shooting the Clint Eastwood directed "Space Cowboys," for Warner Bros. (Shooting in Florida, Texas, New Mexico and California)...

Don Peterman, ASC ("Get Shorty") is lensing "How the Grinch Stole X-Mas," for Ron Howard and Universal Pictures. (Shooting in Los Angeles)...

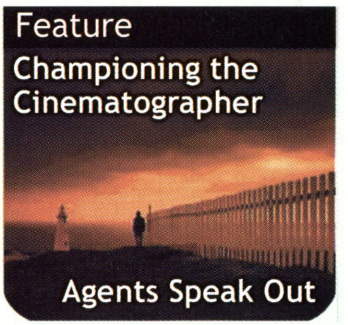
Tak Fujimoto, ASC ("The Sixth Sense") shoots "The Replacements," for Warner Bros. (Shooting in Baltimore)...

Don Burgess, ASC ("Forrest Gump") shoots the new Bob Zemeckis film "What Lies Beneath," for Dreamworks. (Shooting in Vermont)...

More Production News







Options Debuts Two New Products

Options International, a worldwide distributor and system integrator for telecine and film-related equipment, will debut the X-Box modular video system and DAV's HD converter for [illegible]kIII telecines at IBC 99. The X-Box modular video system offers the ability to [illegible] between multiple HD and standard definition [illegible] DAV's HD converter will [illegible] standard, SD and HD machines.

Thu Sep 9, 1999, 2:52 PM PDT

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

Preparations are underway for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television's 70th Anniversary Celebration.

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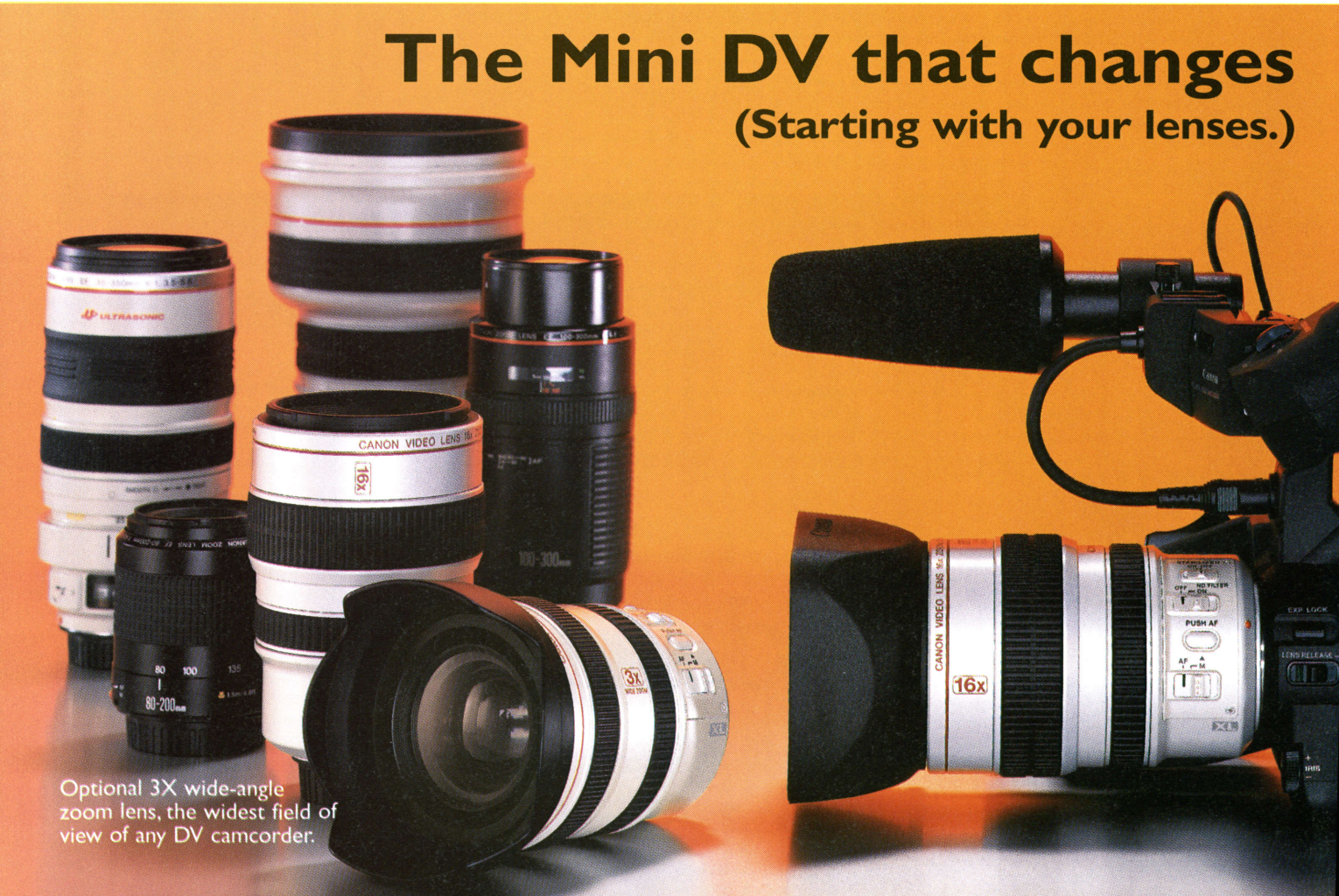


An array of space lights illuminates the playing field at the redressed Texas Stadium.

principal photography, when the whole cast was gathered for a scene involving a mayoral benefit at the nine-acre Sky Mansion in the Coconut Grove section of Miami. "The key grip, Doug Cowden, and his crew only had three nights to rig around the mansion, and we only had permission to shoot there for three nights," the cameraman relates. "We finally did the last scene at dawn after the final night, so we had to shoot dawn-for-dusk! It was that down-to-the-wire. I couldn't actually rig inside the mansion, so I floated round helium balloons with four 1K tungsten bulbs inside of them, and lit the whole party from above. The balloons were white, but we kept them on dimmers to keep them a bit warm. They have an effect that's similar to Chinese lanterns."

While the focus pullers were constantly challenged during the lightning-quick football scenes, their skills were put to perhaps their toughest test during a demanding night dialogue scene outside the Sky Mansion. "James Woods and Matthew Modine, who play the team doctors, have a long dialogue scene during which they walk away from the mansion," Totino details. "As they proceed, the mansion gradually fades into the background. I held a soft

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Chimera light on a pole as I walked with the actors, because I literally didn't trust anyone else to keep the light at the right distance. We were wide open at T2 on the scene. We started the scene using a 40mm and a 75mm on a Steadicam. Then Oliver said, 'Gimme the 150!' I saw [camera assistant] Mark Williams turn white — the actors had to walk and talk for about 75 yards! Mark and Steve Meizler, our focus pullers, both did an amazing job on this film. It was a real survival test."

Clearly battle-hardened by the whirlwind experience of *Any Given Sunday,* Totino still marvels at Stone's willingness to entrust a first-time feature cinematographer on such a sprawling project. "Oliver took a very big chance on me," the cinematographer concedes. "I really like how willing he is to take chances, because I'm the same way. In my work I always take a chance — sometimes it works out, and sometimes it doesn't. But that's how you learn. Taking those chances pushes you to the edge and adds an excitement to what you're shooting." ■



The fleet-footed Beamen scrambles away from tacklers and into the open field.

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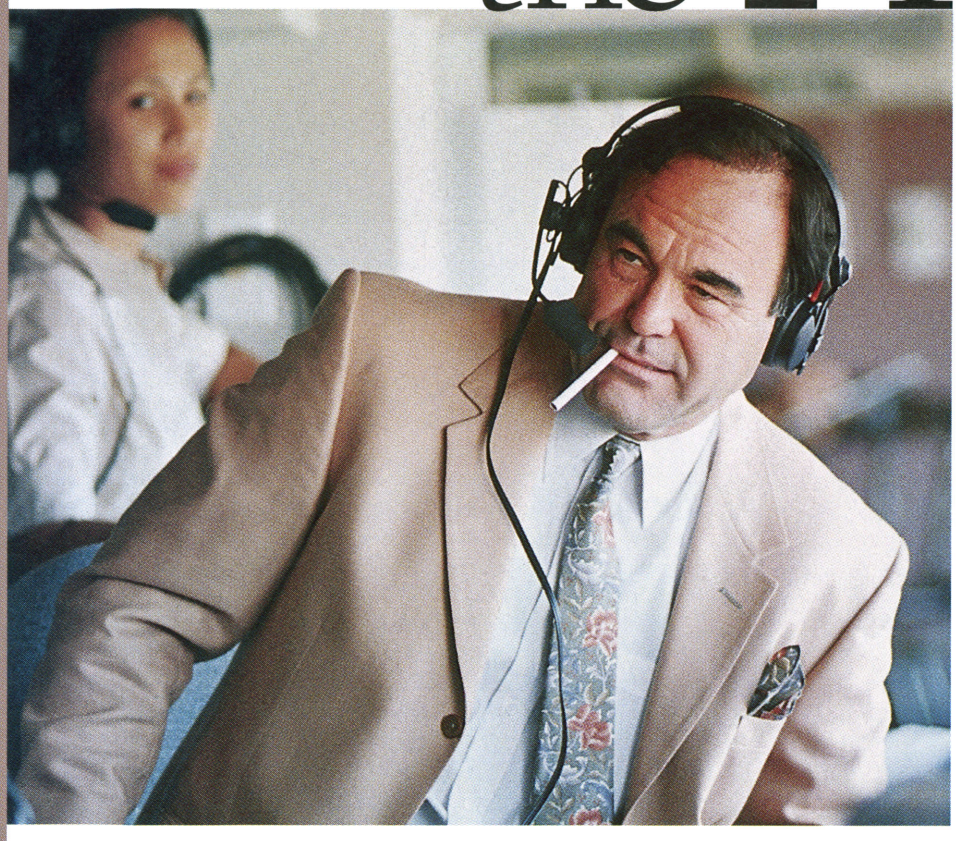
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Calling the Plays



Cinematic quarterback Oliver Stone plunges headfirst into the world of pro football.

Interview by Chris Pizzello

Unit Photography by Robert Zuckerman

With its distinctly American blend of brutal trench warfare on the field and smooth spin-doctoring in the skyboxes, the NFL is a subject ideally suited to the mercurial temperament of Oliver Stone — a filmmaker equally comfortable aiming his lens at the world's footsoldiers (*Salvador, Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July*) and power-brokers (*Wall Street, JFK, Nixon*). Sarcastic sports scribes have been known to refer to the image-conscious NFL as the "National Fantasy League," and Stone has consistently demonstrated his willingness to expose the ugly hypocrisies and Machiavellian power moves that prop up "sacred" American institutions.

The Oscar-winning director's vehemence as a provocateur is matched by his sheer visual nerve. Powered along by the iconoclastic stylings of his longtime creative partner, Robert Richardson, ASC, Stone's films have always gone for broke stylistically, from the hallucinatory aura of *The Doors* to the sensory assault of *Natural Born Killers. Any Given Sunday,* shot by Salvatore Totino and juiced with a dizzying array of "Ratcams," bungee cams and Image Shakers, appears to be no exception.

A candid and humorous Stone took time out after a long day of postproduction work on *Any Given Sunday* to speak to *AC* about what he describes as his most technically challenging project to date.

***American Cinematographer:* *Any Given Sunday* is your first film set in the world of professional sports. What excited you about pro football on both a thematic and visual level?**

Stone: Thematically, and I guess visually, you could say it's a battlefield. There is a concept of war

Photos courtesy of Warner Bros.

in football, and there is headbashing, *real* headbashing — I'm talking *Braveheart* time here! Real battles between men. There is more action footage per minute in this film than you've seen in a long time. I've wanted to do an action film for a while, which is why I did some development on *Mission Impossible 2*. I wanted to do an epic in widescreen 2.35:1 again, going back to the days of *Born on the Fourth of July* and *The Doors*.

Thematically, the film is about change. The young are always trying to climb across your back, or climb *on* your back. I view it as the evolutionary 'climbing on the backs of your ancestors' concept. At its center, the film is a conflict between the characters over the importance of their individual approaches. In other words, does the ego meld with the corporate strategy of a team? How do you become a member of a team? Is there such a thing as a star? We seek stars in our society, yes, but at the same time football is very much a corporate game.

For example, Barry Sanders retired from the Detroit Lions this year, and that's a very interesting story. We've always thought that he was a star surrounded by a bunch of schmucks, right? Not true! The fact is, they're winning this year. Look at the San Francisco 49ers years ago. When they first started their rise in the '80s, they were definitely corporate, a *team*. Unfortunately, once the 49ers were exalted, the media missed the point and made Joe Montana the reigning king, and then Jerry Rice and Steve Young. You look at them now and they have the stars, but they don't have the team. They don't have the offensive line, they don't have the defensive backs. You need depth to play in the NFL!

Football has been the backdrop for a lot of films, and it's aired constantly by the major television networks on weekends. How did you go about forming a visual strategy that presented the game in a fresh and exciting way?



Opposite page: Puffing away on a cigarette, Stone makes an amusing cameo as a play-by-play announcer. This page: Stone and Totino study their X's and O's.

Stone: To be honest, the approach to this picture was formed over time through the collaboration of many minds. [Production designer] Victor Kempster and [cinematographer] Sal Totino were my right and left hands, along with [producer] Clayton Townsend. Clayton's crew was really crucial to setting up the locations, filming in the stadiums, getting permission within the stadiums, dealing with sunlight, and rigging Texas Stadium. We lost entire weekends because it was just impossible to cover that hole over Texas Stadium. We'd get sun all through the day at some points, so we were very limited in our shooting abilities there.

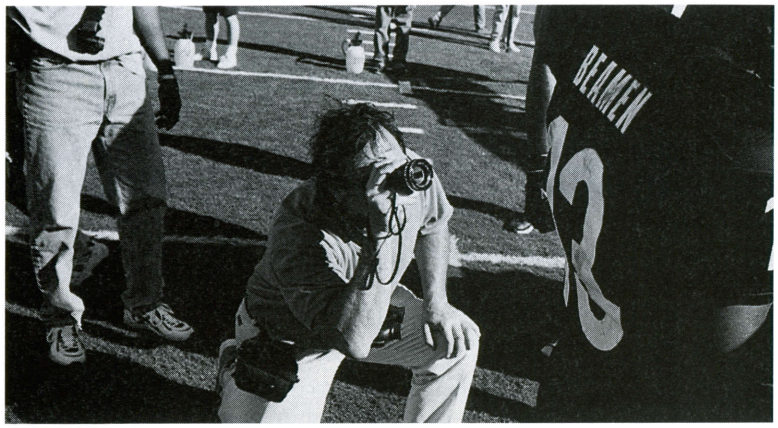
I'd always wanted to do a football movie, and here was a chance to not only shoot a football movie, but to try for something *big*. I wanted to tell a story with 10 or 15 characters, like *Ben-Hur* did in the old days. I'm not saying our film is like *Ben-Hur*, but we were using that concept as a model. I wanted the film to be modern, but I also wanted to pay homage to a movie tradition. We therefore have the scope, the gladiators, and crowds of 70,000 watching and screaming and roaring. You know what an NFL crowd is like! College crowds are a bunch of polite animals compared to an NFL crowd. So the movie is epic, but hopefully intimate at the same time.

We tried to shoot *inside* the football games with long lenses, and we worked with a bungee camera. God, was that complicated! I saw the Image Shaker in *Saving Private Ryan*, and when I talked to Steven [Spielberg] about the film, that was the first thing I asked him about.

In using technical innovations like the Image Shaker, the 'Ratcam' and the bungee cam, was your goal to present as subjective a viewing experience as possible?

Stone: Before production I looked at about 100 football movies done by NFL Films and many other outfits. Some of them were better-made than others, but they were all limited in some way. The most interesting films used long lenses, with good sound on the coaches and the line of scrimmage while the players were on the field of battle. That always excited me, to get *inside* the war. I think that's why, ultimately, we sometimes used as few as three cameras and other times as many as eight or nine. I did the best I could to look at all of the footage, but I could not possibly run between eight different positions in an NFL stadium. Some of the footage doesn't match with the other footage, but that's okay. We were shooting in varying sunlight conditions, especially while we were in Dallas.

Calling the Plays



Peering through a viewfinder, Stone frames actor Jamie Foxx on the field.

This is your first film in a while without Robert Richardson, ASC as your director of photography. Could you comment on why the two of you didn't work together on this film?

Stone: Scheduling and commitment problems. Plus, I don't think Bob really likes football all that much — I think he's a baseball fanatic!

How did Salvatore Totino come to your attention, and how did you adjust to working with a new cinematographer?

Stone: I hired him after just one meeting, believe it or not. I picked Sal's reel out of maybe 50 reels from young cameramen. I met him through his agent, Spiros Skouras, who also represents Bob Richardson and a lot of good young cinematographers. I loved the reel and loved Sal as a person. I had a good instinct about him from the beginning, and felt that he would have a very calm temperament. He's Italian, and I like that — he cooks good pasta. [Laughs.]

You have no idea how complex a job it was for a first-time [feature] cinematographer to attempt a film of this scope with a full second unit. If it had been me, I would have been nervous. It was not easy for Sal to adapt to the conditions of this movie. He lit one game from only one side of the field, which takes guts! You have actors who are concerned about their lighting, so it's natural that he would have a million worries. But he went with the flow, which is very Italian, very Mediterranean.

There's something I find very interesting about his work as I watch the film over and over. I like how Sal is unafraid of shadow. He went all the way with it, like cinematographers used to do in the old days. He has a big and old-fashioned lighting sense, yet it's also progressive. He uses the best of the new techniques in a loving way.

He also has a heart for people, especially Al Pacino. He even looks like Al. Sal Totino, Al Pacino — how close are those names? Sal came to me early on, and he said, 'He looks like my father!' So it was like he was shooting his father at times. He was reverential about Al in a way that I guess only Italians could know amongst themselves. He has a deep affection for *The Godfather* and the many other films Al's been in.

How did you feel about Totino's decision to shoot Pacino's character in warm light to separate him from the other characters?

Stone: I always like warm light for everybody, because I want the audience to love the characters. You root for everybody in this particular film — there are no villains. They're all people who have pasts and problems. They have various forms of epiphanies, or discoveries that allow them to see themselves in a new light and then move on.

There's definitely an underdog quality to Al's character, though, and Sal sides with him. He shot him in a beautiful style of light. The moment Al showed up in Miami, I wanted a tan on him. I figured a football coach in Miami would have a tan and be wearing jewelry, as if Scarface had found his way out of crime by becoming a football coach! [Laughs.]

How tough was it to give each football game a distinct look?

Stone: We shot the first game in the Orange Bowl during the day, but we were paying the price shooting during the winter there, because the sun was dropping at 4:15 in the afternoon. We were using real players rather than extras for the games. You can't play those guys all the time like robots. They come out for an hour or three hours of football, and they play concentrated and intense, rather than loose. Filmmaking is 'hurry up and wait,' like the Army. It's very hard to keep that together, plus you have the actors and all of their demands. Sal, the producers and I came up with a strikingly bold innovaton — shooting the second half of Game One at night. We simply abandoned the idea of finishing the game in the daytime. I said, 'If it goes from light to dark, who cares? The Super Bowl is like that.'

I guess you could say I took the 'who cares' approach for the first game. Ultimately, I think that was a good decision. Although it cost more money to put that lighting package up in Miami, we would have been dead the other way — sitting around forever trying to finish it as a day game. It was a military decision at a time of crisis, because I felt that we would drop 10 or 15 days right there. The morale of the company was very important at that point. And it worked, because it gave us a half day/half night for Game One, a full day on Game Two, a full day on Game Three at the high-tech Pro Player Stadium, a night game in the rain for Game Four and then the

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Calling the Plays



Stone takes refuge in his "cocoon," a tented area that allows him to avoid both distractions and "backseat directors."

finalé in Texas Stadium.

Why didn't the NFL sanction the movie?

Stone: They didn't like the book on which our movie was based, which was written by some NFL team trainers in the '70s. But there's not that much of the book left in our screenplay. We modernized it. The NFL just does not want any negative portrayal of their association.

It all turned out okay, though, because in the long run it was better for us to set the movie in the near future. I asked our costume designer, Mary Zophres, to look at old uniform textures, and she devised an interim solution, something between the old and the new style. They're better than the current NFL uniforms. We have some beautiful uniforms with really saturated colors.

Could you explain the genesis of the idea for the continuous advertising around the walls of the Orange Bowl?

Stone: We had problems with our budget, and we were looking for product-placement money. We had a lot of sideline shots, so we picked up a lot of money by doing that. I also wanted the walls built high to knock out the demand for consistent live extras. I was pushing for 6- to 12-foot walls if possible. I think we settled for 7 or 8 feet in places. We built up the walls and repainted the fields. We have strange advertising that looks as if it's from another time period. [The NFL's decision not to sanction the film] freed Victor [Kempster] to go into the future. If he'd been bound by reality, I think it would have been a lesser-looking film. It looks really beautiful. The three stadiums we used look remarkably different from each other.

Totino commented that early on you're not very direct or verbal in describing what you want visually, that you try more often to invoke 'feelings' in the cinematographer.

Stone: I think he may be talking about light. I'm very specific with camera positioning. I pretty much know where I want to be for a shot, although I'm open to suggestions or reasoning. I'll always listen to a better idea. But I always know which shot I want first, and where I'm going to put the camera.

He mentioned that you wanted a certain warm feeling for the Miami scenes.

Stone: I wanted to be on the yellow side of the spectrum. I was going for saturation — yellows, tobaccos, reds and terra-cottas. Those colors are definitely my favorites, and I've used them through all of my films. This was a chance to go all out, since I was in the Southland. I was not going to pull any punches by going with some technical, TV commercial, muted

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bypass look. I was going to go whole-hog. I wanted to make Miami look carnivalesque and beautiful — I didn't want to use the type of blue light you see in Swedish films for scenes set in Miami!

Do you generally like to stay away from the cool end of the light spectrum?

Stone: I love cold light when it's used properly, as it was by Vittorio Storaro [ASC, AIC] in *The Conformist* years ago. Sal uses it properly, and Storaro and Bob Richardson also do a great job with cool light. Sometimes it's overused, and sometimes it's great. But it's *northern*. Whether [that look] came from the northern U.S., Britain or northern Europe, I'm not sure. It has its advocates, but it's not my thing. It always feels a little bit affected to me. What was that famous movie where every window was blown out? *Flashdance*. It's something to marvel at, but it's not necessarily something to get into and to *feel*. *Alien* started [that trend] in some sense, along with *Blade Runner*. Both of those films were designed beautifully by Ridley Scott for alienated future science-fiction worlds, not present-day reality. Unfortunately, that look crept into a lot of films in the '80s and '90s. I've never been a big fan of it, although I use it once in a while.

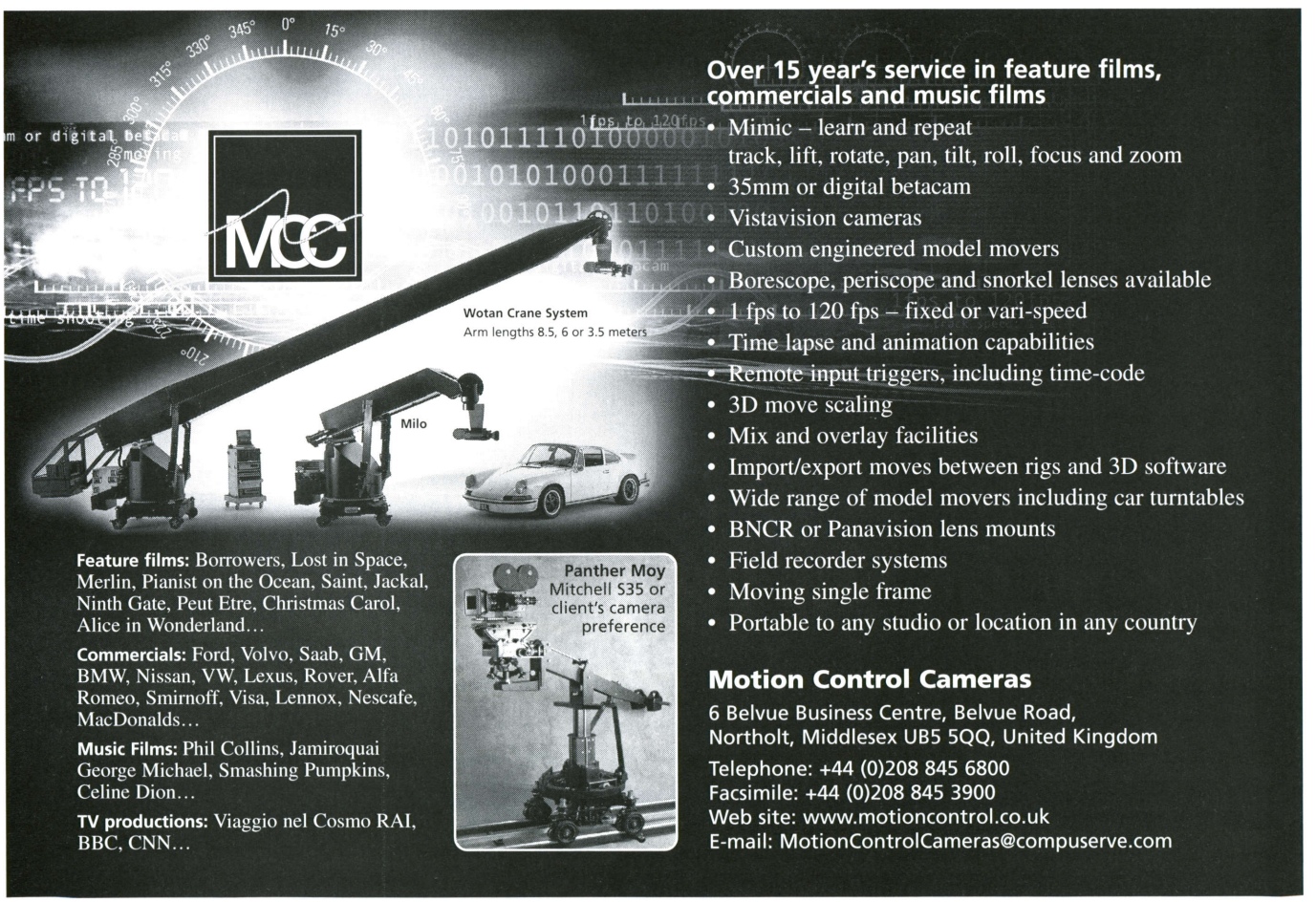
I love shadow, and I think Sal is very good in the way he cuts shadow. You'll see a lot of shots like that in this film, if it's reproduced correctly through our processes at Technicolor. He keeps it up, and he's consistent. I love when you see a movie for two hours, and the cinematographer is just doing it all the way through — when there's a consistency to the whole thing. Obviously a lot of cinematographers are flashy here and there, but the whole has to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Sal used a combination of Kodak and Fuji stocks for the football games. Were you ever worried that the combination would break up the visual consistency of the film?

Stone: No, because each game was intended to have a different look — that approach went along with the design of the film. But the [tricky element] was that we really wanted people to connect to Al Pacino's character. To photograph him with love made all the difference in the world. Light is energy, which Einstein proved. If you allow the proper energy to surround the figure you're photographing, it will be reflected on film.

Would you say this is the most technically challenging film you've ever made?

Stone: Without a doubt. When I shot my Vietnam films, we had to deal with dust in the camera, the heat



and sun, the clouds over Thailand, and the jungles at night with all of the bugs. But when you have to do it on a ritualistic basis with thousands of people looking at every action on the field, it's a whole different ballgame. You not only have to worry about what you have to shoot, but also the reaction on the sidelines and in the crowd. It's like a drama, a stage play. Football is also very exact. There are a set of rules you have to follow. Fourth and three, third and two, with chains measuring everything. It's not like real war — it's a controlled war, which is very difficult to shoot.

Totino said he was surprised by how slow he found the real football games to be.

Stone: Football isn't slow to the players, but it can be to the viewers. We tried to lend a sense of adrenaline and speed to the scenes in which [actor] Jamie Foxx first comes onto the field. The best rookies from the colleges are always saying how fast the plays are in the NFL. The margin for error is very small, and we wanted to capture that on camera.

I think after people see this film, it will be very hard for them to return to watch football the way it's regularly televised. Maybe the techniques we developed — the camera placements, the sound, and the lenses — will be common in two or three years. The networks steal from feature films all the time. If they borrowed some of our techniques, I think it would improve the game vastly and capture a younger audience. Football is too slow right now. When you watch a three-hour game on TV, most of the time it's a bore! The opponents aren't evenly matched, there are too many commercials, and they cut away right at the moment when a team is starting to roll. Three hours go by and you get one hour of football and two hours of commercials. This movie challenges that ethos. Unfortunately, it will probably cause some turbulence along the way. Some people will not be happy with that challenge, because of the money that would be involved, so they'll try to subvert it.

Were you influenced at all on this film by your own football experiences during your youth?

Stone: I played in junior high, but I wasn't a great player. I was a good left halfback in elementary school, but the coaches were screwing with the kids' heads. They put them into positions where they didn't belong, and that was the end of them. The put me in at fullback instead of keeping me at halfback. It was not my position! I'm a frustrated halfback who was forced to play fullback. Another one down the drain... [Laughs.] I could have been the Heisman Trophy winner, I could have gone all the way! ■





Alter Ego

Cinematographer John Seale, ASC, ACS reteams with director Anthony Minghella on *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, a scenic psychological thriller.

by Jay Holben

Unit photography by Phil Bray

Most of us have been disappointed with ourselves at some point. We've all felt inferior. We've all been at the edge of things and wished we were someone else," contends writer/director Anthony Minghella (an Academy Award-winner for *The English Patient*). "It's a feeling we can all empathize with, and that's what really fascinated me about the story for *The Talented Mr. Ripley* — the idea of wanting to exchange your identity for someone else's. Wanting to give yourself up completely and become someone else is a deep desire that stems from some inner discontent, some self-dissatisfaction, and even a self-loathing that is basic to human nature."

After a concerted effort, producers William Horberg and Tom Sternberg finally secured the rights to Patricia Highsmith's novel (which had previously been brought to the screen in 1960 by French director Rene Clement, under the title *Purple Noon*) for Sydney Pollack's Mirage Enterprises. They then asked Minghella to pen the adaptation for them. The writer/director fielded the offer during a long lull in preproduction on *The English Patient*, and agreed to take on the job. "I liked the book very much, and I thought that I would simply write the screenplay," Minghella recalls. "However, as soon as I began to work on the book, I became obsessed with making the film, and very reluctant to relinquish my grasp on it. Mirage and Paramount were kind enough to wait until I finished making *The English Patient* before seriously discussing the fate of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. I then spent about a year revising the script, and became more and more passionate about directing the film."

In the wake of their enormously successful partnership on *The English Patient*, Minghella and cinematographer John Seale, ASC, ACS (who earned an Oscar for his photography) decided to reteam on *Ripley*. "John has been a very significant partner for me in filmmaking," offers Minghella. "The type of filmmaker that I am now has evolved from working with him for several years and learning a great deal from him. One of the cleverest things I've done as a director is to surround myself with people who do their jobs much

Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

better than I do mine. I've managed to draw upon the experience from very significant collaborators like John, and I've managed to learn as much from them as I have from the actual experience of shooting.

"I have enormous regard for John as a cinematographer," Minghella continues. "As a fellow director, he is a man of few words. In my very noisy team of collaborators, he is by far the least noisy of them. But he is absolutely a *doer*, and he's most happy when he's shooting. One of the things I've learned from him is to have no fear about shooting. If we equate filmmaking to fighting a war, he's definitely a soldier I want with me in a battle, because he'll never give up. He plays down his artistry in favor of his artisanship, in the sense that he's not somebody who wants to debate the artistic merits of the moment. He doesn't want to invade my process and make the film for me; he's there to help me get it done."

Seale, who attributes his filmmaking approach to his experiences on low-budget productions in his homeland of Australia, concurs. "You should never be fighting to make your own movie. As a cinematographer, it's my job to get on the director's visual and narrative wavelength. Every film should be totally different, and you should have a blank, open mind as you go into it. I feel that if I carry a personal cinematic style with me on to every film — just because it looks good — I'm making a mistake. Every film is a new visual experience that evolves out of working with the director and dealing with the locations, the weather patterns, and so on. To a certain degree, all of those factors are going to take control over you. In the end, though, you're making the film for the director, and he or she should always be supported. Good or bad, I've stood by that methodology, and I believe it's the way films should be done; I believe in the strength and the creativity of my directors. They need my support, not my attempts to control them."



Opposite: Tom Ripley (Matt Damon) watches Herbert Greenleaf (Jude Law) jam at a jazz club. This page: Director of photography John Seale operates a shot while on location in Rome.

The Talented Mr. Ripley tracks the sinister exploits of Tom Ripley (Matt Damon), an opportunistic American entrepreneur and dreamer who is hired by the wealthy and powerful Herbert Greenleaf to locate his wayward son, Dickie (Jude Law), and lure him back from Europe, where he's been leading a life of opulent frivolity. During this mission, however, the enterprising Ripley becomes obsessed with the younger Greenleaf's extravagant lifestyle, and soon befriends him. While the duo are sailing off the coast in Greenleaf's yacht, Ripley openly admits that he covets his friend's flamboyant trappings. The discussion takes a dark turn, and in a fit of rage, Ripley murders the man he secretly wishes to be; when the dust settles, he realizes that he can methodically assume Greenleaf's identity. While weaving this web of deceit, the smooth-talking Ripley manages to escape punishment and detection long enough to plunge himself deeper and deeper into the purgatory of his own desires.

"The beginning of the film is very pretty," Seale notes. "It's all about sailing, jazz and the beauty of the Italian Riveria. After Ripley kills Greenleaf, the film could very well have changed gears to become a much darker, colder, and more contrasty movie — which is a classic way of portraying the fact that the main character is now a murderer. We opted not to take that path, however. This story isn't about Ripley deliberately becoming a murderer; he does so out of a very sad circumstance. Instead, we decided to keep Italy a happy, sunny place where this darkness occurs within Ripley. The life-and-death cycle has gone on for thousands of years there, and this is just another story in that long history."

Minghella agrees, "Nature is hugely indifferent to what is going on. The film is lit with warm hues that serve to collect what is innately gorgeous about the landscape, and completely contradict the rather purgatorial journey that we are being led on. Rather than present *Mr. Ripley* as a collection of monochrome and increasingly moody images full of presentiment, we decided it would be much more interesting to do absolutely the reverse, and lend the film a romantic look that would stand in counterpoint to the action.

"I don't ever begin a film with a manifesto about how we should shoot it," Minghella adds. "I begin by collaborating with the people I trust the most to bring the screenplay to life. John and I have a very successful



Scenic locations in Italy were treated consistently thoughout the shoot despite the narrative's dark turn. Minghella and Seale discussed making a stylistic change after the plot's key twist, but decided that retaining an atmosphere of romantic naturalism would provide an interesting counterpoint to the tragic story.

partnership in that neither of us are iconoclastic. We both try to learn from the screenplay and arrive at a general approach to the film through the story. For *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, I had two basic ideas that I brought to the table in terms of how we might shape this film. The first idea was to relocate the story from the mid-1950s to the end of the decade. During the late 1950s, Italy was going through a period of near revolution called 'Il Boom,' when the country was emerging from the doldrums of the Second World War. There was new money in the country, and it was a resurgent period when the people were able to begin dressing and traveling with a certain style and an eye for elegance. Suddenly there were Lambrettas and Vespas everywhere, along with Italian suits and the new look of Italy. I thought that would be a much more pungent visual landscape.

"That was also the period when *La Dolce Vita* was being shot, and I always had this romantic notion that if we were shooting on one street, Fellini might have been around the corner shooting that picture on another. Certainly, I watched that film with all of my collaborators prior to starting *Ripley,* because in some ways it is — like all films shot in their own contemporary time — a documentary as well as a fictional piece. When you're watching that type of film, you can see what the streets looked like, what people were wearing and which cars were being driven. From *La Dolce Vita,* you can also get a sense of how Italy expressed itself during that time. Our job was to try to reproduce that feeling in this film."

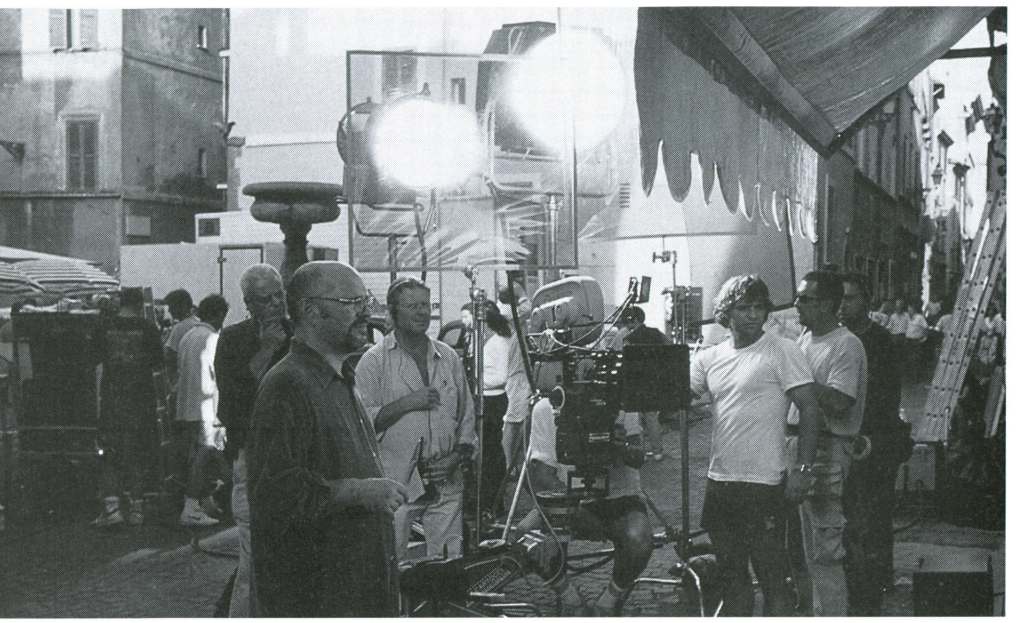


Seale chose to capture "The Sweet Life" entirely on Eastman Kodak's EXR 500T 5298. "I've almost always used the high-speed Kodak stock," he attests. "Day, night, interior, exterior — I use just the one stock. I find that it helps considerably in being able to shoot exteriors with failing light or to start shooting earlier in the morning. You can use lenses that are slow and not worry about having to add a lot of light. Also, in combination with the Panavision [Platinum] cameras, I can just ND the film [with behind-the-lens filters] to whatever [ISO] I want, bringing it down by 20, 40, 60, 80 or whatever I need. If my first AC needs a bit more focus, I can pull out some of the ND and give him more depth of field. I simply have much more flexibility all around with the high-speed stock, which I always rate at 400 [ISO]. It gives me a little bit up my sleeve with a denser negative. Also, if I force-develop at all, I'll only rate it another ½ to ⅔ of a stop, because I don't think we ever get a full one-stop push from the lab. In that case, I'll rate the stock at 640 [ISO] and play it a bit safe.

"Something I love to do, as I am unashamedly a reality cameraman, is to see where nature would put the light or where man has put the light in a building or on a street. Then, I'll usually enhance that same lighting to a photographic level at which I can shoot. Obviously, high-speed stock gets me there a bit more quickly.

"I'm a very simple person, and I think I shoot very simply," Seale asserts. "I set out to make the film as best as I can rather than to adorn it with incredible visual style. Most of the directors that I've had the privilege to work with love the reality of


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Minghella (foreground) plots a setup on the streets of Rome. Taking into account his film's late 1950s setting, the filmmaker fantasized that Federico Fellini was shooting *La Dolce Vita* a block or two away.

life. I'd much rather photograph that reality than alter it just so it will look pretty."

When it comes to hardware, the cinematographer testifies that he has always been a "Panavision man." He maintains, "Their equipment is very operator-friendly, and I love their Primo lenses, especially the 11:1 Primo zoom, which I believe should get an Academy Award — it's a scorchingly amazing lens! I find myself using zooms much more often than most other cinematographers I know, and the 11:1 is a beautiful piece of optical equipment. Its contrast is fantastic — so much better than the 5:1, and that was always a good lens. It's also a T2.8, which is wonderfully fast for a zoom. You could theoretically bolt it to the front of the camera and shoot a whole picture with it — which I practically do! It has just a slight limitation on the wider end of its range [24-275mm].

"It used to be that the optics in zooms were substantially inferior in quality to the primes, but not now — the differences between primes and zooms are practically nonexistent, especially with the Primo series. Primes still have a better optical clarity than zooms do, but it isn't a *far* better clarity, and to me it's not enough to sacrifice using the zoom. Some people may worry that I'm using the zoom as a zoom, and I suppose sometimes I do — but I also use the zoom as a multi-focal-length lens that I can adjust in shot whenever the camera or the actor moves. I love to operate. With a zoom I can tighten up the frame gently or loosen up a bit to provide much more freedom for the actors to do what they want. I'll get in awful trouble [with other cinematographers] for saying this, but sometimes I'll move the camera just so I can tighten the zoom. I've learned that if you can pan while you're zooming, even slightly, you won't notice the zoom.

"When I do get to operate, I use a head like a documentary camera with the Microforce zoom control attached on the pan handle. Some people hate it, but I love it — I just gently press the button so the zoom will start to creep in. You have to look at the edges of the frame to know that it's moving. I love to use the zoom as a visual tool; it has a wonderful power that I can't work without. A prime lens to me is held in the truck for high-speed work. I'll always carry a T1.1 55mm lens for scenes involving cigarettes or matchlighting, or if I suddenly need a high-speed lens at the end of the day. I also carry a little set for handheld and Steadicam work, but as far as I'm concerned, the rest of the movie is shot on zooms. It gives me the ability to be able to change the focal length during the shot or between takes without wasting a lot of time.

"I love working fast," Seale continues. "I believe that everybody's brain stays honed to what they're doing if you keep moving along. If anyone has time to stop and think about what they'd rather be doing, then I think they're bored, and nobody should be bored on a film set. Therefore, I always try to move as fast as I can. When I was shooting *Rain Man* for Barry Levinson, we were moving along at a nice clip, and Dustin [Hoffman] came up to me and said, 'God we're working so fast I haven't got time to get out of character.' I thought about that comment for a long time. If we're shooting so fast that an actor hasn't got time to slip out of character, surely that must be better for the film.

"One of the things I can do to make sure we're moving fast is to always pre-light in my mind. If I'm working with a good gaffer, it makes things much easier. Sometimes if I'm with a new gaffer, we'll get to the end of a shot and the AD will say, 'Okay, check the gate — gate's clean,' and in the next minute the set is suddenly cleared of all the lights! I've already lit the reverse in my mind using those lights, though, so I'll tell them to stop [removing the lights]. I'll take the gaffer aside and say, 'Hey, the way I love to work is that I just leave the set hot all the time. Don't move a lamp after we've finished a shot, because you're just going to overwork everybody when I bring it back.' As a result, the set sometimes looks like a jumble, but in my mind's eye, I can quickly see that we're going to use that lamp for the fill, that the backlight will become the key, and that the fill will become the backlight.

Kees Van Oostrum ASC has shot mostly with Primos, but also with all the Zeiss lenses and now with the Cookes. Here's what he thinks:

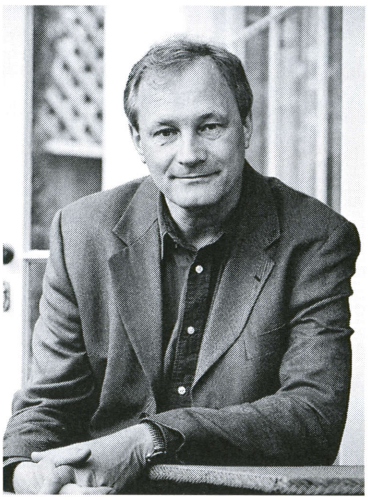
"When I began working as a DP, it was in Hollywood. I started out with Panaflexes and used nothing else for twelve years," says Kees Van Oostrum.

"Then I was hired, in 1996, to shoot a *Profiler* pilot that called for several mid-shot speed changes. I decided to go with the Arriflex 535, because it would be able to hold exposure when we varied speed."

"When shooting began, I saw that the 535's finder was a big improvement. And with the Moviecam SL for hand-held and Steadicam, I found the whole system comfortable – a winner. But the lenses weren't what I was used to."

"Right after that pilot, which we shot with Zeiss Superspeeds, I worked on *The Old Man*, a feature based on the Faulkner novel. I stayed with the 535 system; and we used selected Zeiss Standards."

"I was then hired to shoot the rest of the year's *Profiler*. The new Zeiss Variable Primes had just become available, so we tried a set of those on our first episode. They were excellent. For the rest of the series, that's what we shot with."



Kees Van Oostrum ASC NSC

"As we were finishing that series, the first set of Cooke primes arrived in Hollywood. I was able to borrow them for a day and use them on a couple of *Profiler* scenes. They were superb – all I had been hoping for. And the 50mm, for example, weighed only 3.3 pounds – not front-heavy on a Moviecam SL. So we could use our A camera lenses for hand-held."

"Since then, I've used the Cookes to shoot a Fox feature *Next to You* and a Turner film *You Know My Name*, which we decided to bleach-pull. It's about an oil town in the Thirties, so we wanted a period look but with strong blacks."

"Bleach-pulling the final print desaturates the color and intensifies the blacks, but it also adds contrast. On previous bleach-pull jobs, I sometimes had to put a low-contrast filter on the camera. But not with the Cookes."

"The least contrasty of the Zeiss lenses were the Variable Primes. But even with those, we sometimes had to use Promist, which compromised their sharpness."

"In fact, these Cookes may even be sharper than the Primos," says Mr Van Oostrum. "On screen, the Cookes are somewhat less contrasty in my A/B tests, yet both sets look comparably sharp. That suggests higher resolution in the Cookes. Certainly, their detail and subtlety are extraordinary. They are my first choice."

Mr Van Oostrum has won three Emmy nominations and four ASC Award nominations. His *Return To Lonesome Dove* won a 1993 ASC Award.

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The crew lines up a shot on actress Gwyneth Paltrow while filming on Greenleaf's catamaran.

With a really great gaffer like Morris Flam, who knows my style but also has his own eye, things become that much better. On a reverse, we'll swing the camera around and quickly repatch a few lights. Suddenly, 10 minutes later, you've got it trimmed, the actor is back in front of the camera, and you're rolling on a 180-degree turnaround. I think that's very essential, because it keeps everybody busy and maintains the momentum."

Gaffer Flam has previously collaborated with Seale on six features, including *Dead Poets Society* and *The English Patient*. "The best part about working with John is that the job is always about filmmaking," he submits. "The lighting is important, but the story is of paramount importance. John will always sacrifice the lighting or a camera move if it helps to tell a better story. He always says, 'If you make a good movie and tell a good story, then your lighting looks really good. If the story's not as good, then no matter what your lighting is like, it will never look as good.' I definitely concur with that concept.

"On *Ripley*, we responded to the script and the locations," Flam continues. "John has a pretty pragmatic and simple approach to lighting. We try to facilitate the production by accommodating the schedule, and on this project there was a lot of moving around. We had 82 locations in nine different cities throughout Italy, so we had to be pretty mobile and flexible. With John, we'll light the wide shot as efficiently as possible, so there won't be a lot of adjustments between the setups. We may add a bit of fill or do a quick change, but the ideal is to be pretty much ready to go from the start. We try to figure out a way to light the whole scene and keep the lights hidden so that we can turn around without a lot of effort."

The filmmakers began shooting in Rome on August 10, 1999 atop Capitoline Hill, where Ripley surveys the ruins of the ancient Forum. He then strolls across the Campodoglio and enters the Capitoline Museum, where he observes fragments of the Colossus. The first unit then moved to Piazza Mattei and to Piazza di Spagna, the site of the Spanish Steps. After that, the production filmed inside the elegant 14th-century Palazzo Taverna in Rome's center, where an imposing entrance lobby and grand staircase served as the entryway within Ripley's Palazzo Gioia apartment. Further locations included the Fountain of the Four Rivers in Piazza Navona; the mosaic-walled Chiesa Martorana (an historic 14th-century church in Piazza Bellini); a month of shooting on the island of Ischia (a volcanic mass in the Gulf of Naples that is famous for its beautiful beaches and mineral hot springs); Palermo; Anzio; Porto Ercole in Tuscany; on the prow of a vaporetto cutting through the waters of the Grand Canal in Venice; Piazza San March; the Europa Regina Hotel; and a score of other locations in and around Italy's famous landmarks.

"At one point, I wrote down an idea that seemed integral to the film," Minghella recalls. "I thought we should go to landmark locations not simply to make the film look good, but because the central character himself is preoccupied with culture. All of us have a certain preoccupation with historical locations when we travel. We want to be photographed against landmarks, as a way of authenticating our journey — to prove to ourselves that we were there. Since that is the title character's preoccupation, it also had to be the film's preoccupation. We had to present the locations in Italy with which Ripley himself was obsessed — the picture had to be a travelogue as well as a fictional story. I was determined to visit the Spanish steps of Rome, the Piazza Navona, the Piazza del Marco and the Grand Canal in Venice.

"Part of the job was to put Ripley in those places, but that forced us to work in a series of key locations that are entirely unfriendly to filmmakers. All of those locations are places that, as a filmmaker, you would normally never elect to go to, because they make shooting so difficult. Trying to re-create a more desultory and quiet time in Rome amidst the blizzard of visitors near the end of a century is more than

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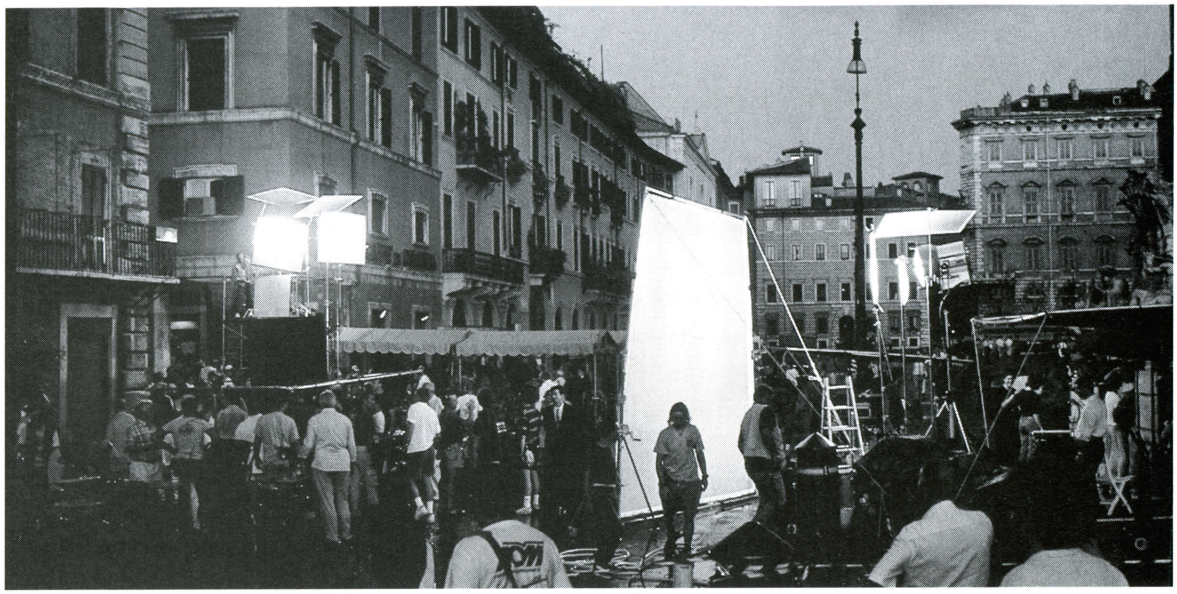
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Controlling sunlight while shooting exteriors became a key concern for Seale, especially as the production alternated between location and stage work done at Cinecitta Studios.

crazy. There were literally thousands of people at each of our locations, and none of them were in period costumes! To simply to get a clean shot with a character who moved 180 degrees or more was a logistical nightmare that placed unimaginable demands on the production team. It required a kind of 'smash-and-grab' shooting style. During a key scene in which Ripley's girlfriend Marge [Gwyneth Paltrow] leaves Venice, we were shooting on a launch on the Grand Canal. Of course, you can't close the Grand Canal, because it's a main thoroughfare. We had ADs controlling period events in the foreground and background, but sometimes — in the deep background, and even at times in the immediate foreground — there were contemporary invasions going on. It was a very key emotional moment for our actress, so I was trying to nurture that moment and give her the space she needed, but at the same time, in the periphery of my vision, I could see an AD signaling that I had five seconds before the shot would be ruined! We weren't just chasing the light — we were chasing the simple opportunity to shoot, and that can become very taxing on a production."

"I don't really have a preference for shooting at locations or on sets," Seale offers. "I find it very lovely, at times, to have a set that allows me to reach back into my memory for a certain moment in life that I can re-create to fulfill the scene. On a stage, of course, you have total control, but I think it's also good to sometimes allow nature to control you. It keeps you on your toes, and you have to stay honed to shoot fast, because nature is not going to stop for you. As a cinematographer, it's a good thing to be aware that you're not always in control. Sometimes I deliberately choose a film that is exactly the opposite of my previous project, just to keep my skills in check. I'll do a jungle film or a desert film, and then I'll do an interior film that's almost entirely on stage.

"On *Ripley*, we'd go off to Ischia for five weeks to do a lot of exteriors that were controlled by weather patterns, then run to Rome and shoot within the totally controlled Cinecitta Studios stages, and then head north to Venice and shoot 'out of control' again. That type of work is very challenging, and it poses a lot of questions in your mind. Where is the sun going to coming up? How long will it stay? Should we start shooting a scene with the sun in shot, since it will be gone in half an hour? Can we replace it? On the Grand Canal, I certainly couldn't — I could not get a crane with a light high enough to create a sun. All of those logistical problems keep your mind working as you try to find the best method that will keep the production rolling."

"John has an amazing ability to solve problems creatively," Minghella attests. "He has skills that were not necessarily learned in the lavish cinema industry of Hollywood, but in the much poorer cinema industry of Australia. He's always got a way of solving things in-camera. He celebrates the 'poor man's process,' and it's always amazing to watch him quickly surmount some colossal problem with an ingenious yet simple solution."

Seale adds, "I often say to Mo, 'Gee, I wonder what other cameramen would think if they knew I was doing this.' He's so lovely, because he always tells me it doesn't matter — that it's going to work. I do break the rules a lot when I'm working on a film. If I can't light it the way I want, I'll sometimes throw a scene away; I just light it so that it can be recorded as well as possible for the moment, and then move on on. I believe in the flavor of the entire film. To be totally honest, sometimes I feel that if I 'win' every scene — if every shot is exactly

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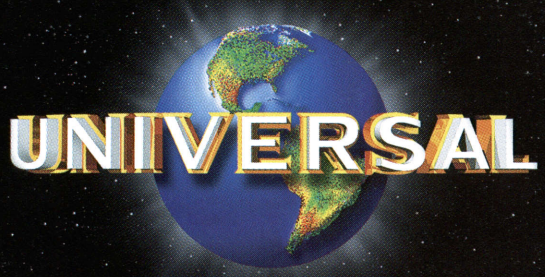
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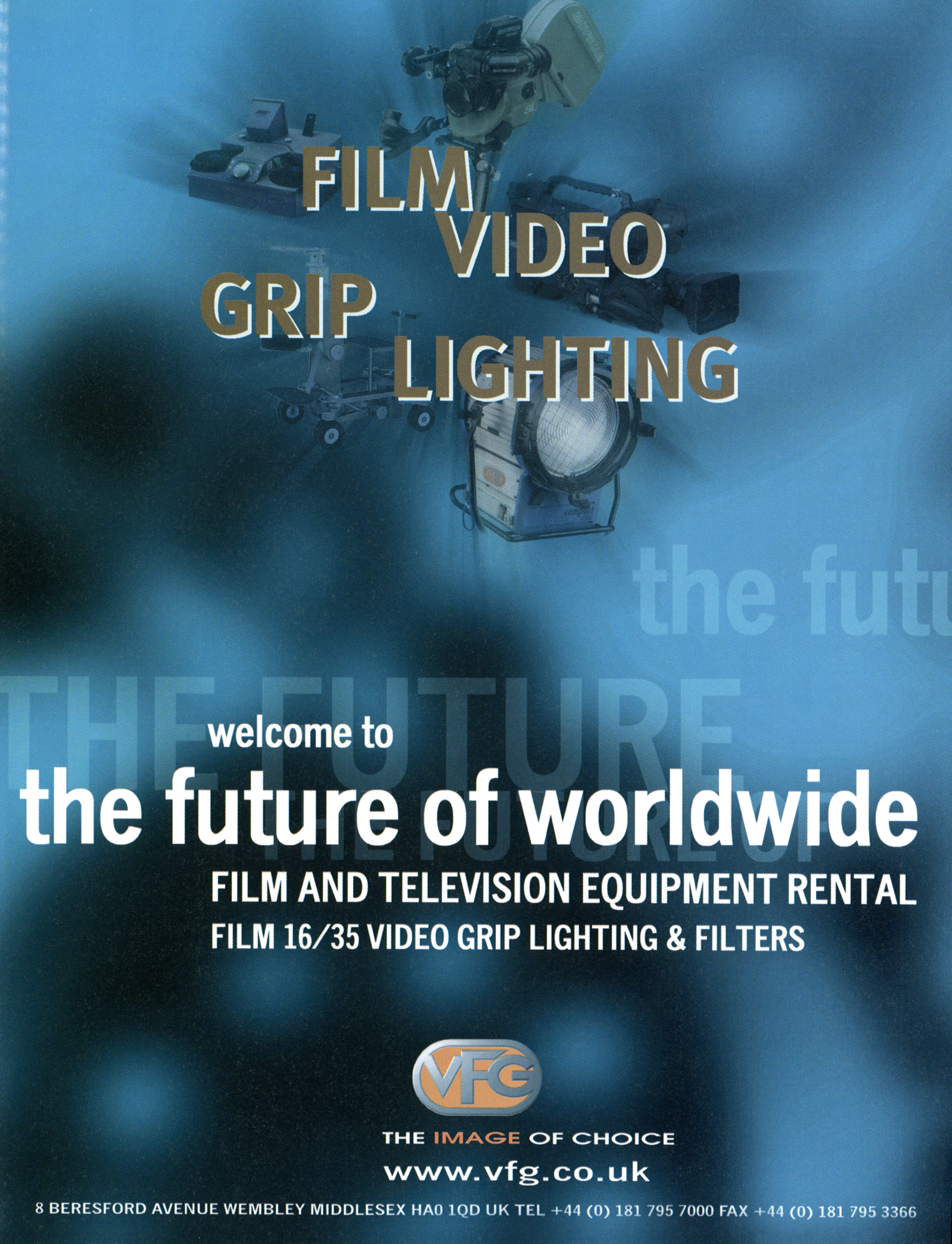
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the way I want it — the film can have a certain sameness all the way through. Whereas if I aim more for reality and suddenly they're on my back saying, 'Come on! We've got to get this quick!' I might not get to light the scene quite the way that I would if I had the time. In that case, I'll just open up another half-stop and shoot it. I don't want to control the pacing of the film with my work. I believe that the final result of the film is what we're all going for, and that cinematography is merely a cog in that machine — along with the editing, the costume design and the production design. I'm just one of those elements that come together for the director to make a film. If one area gets more power, then it takes some power from somewhere else and begins to control the entire film. Over the years, I've learned that that shouldn't happen. We all should work together as much as possible to make the best film we can. If the film is good, the audience will still walk out and say, 'It looked good, didn't it?'

"In August, which is the hottest month of the year, Rome always has a soft, white overcast sky that provides a nice bit of fill," Seale continues. "It's not the high-contrast look that you get in other areas of the world, with an acid blue sky and a burning sun. Those conditions can sometimes be hard to handle."

Flam details, "With the overcast look, we were able to build in our own contrast to suit our needs. One of our best friends in Rome was the Arriflex 12K Par. It's lightweight, which makes it considerably more portable and versatile than an 18K, and it packs much more of a powerful punch. Making a film is sort of like going to war — you have a limited number of weapons that you can bring with you, and those weapons have to do a lot of different things. The 12K Par is an extremely flexible tool. It can work as a really hard source, and it can work just as well as a strong soft source. Even if


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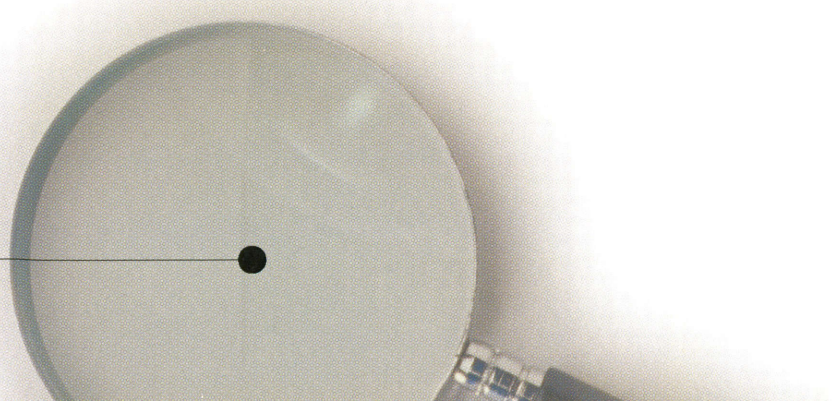
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you're going through heavy diffusion — which we rarely did, because John mainly likes Silent Frost and Hilite — the 12Ks still have a lot of punch. They're easy to put on a scaffold or pretty much anywhere. The only bad thing is that they're so hot that they're hard to gel. If you're working spotty, you're going to have a hard time putting anything in front of a 12K without burning through it in a couple of seconds. Still, it's a very realistic light that can look like the sun. Sometimes lights just can't compete with sunlight, or they don't really look real, but the 12K is capable of providing that feeling of realism. We started out the show with a couple of 18Ks and a 12K Par, but after a few weeks of shooting we were just using the 12Ks. Since you can only carry so many lights on your truck, it behooves you to pick the most versatile units."

"I used the same crew in Italy that we used on *The English Patient*," the gaffer adds. "We pre-rigged everything because it was the only way we could accommodate the schedule and all of the moving. *Ripley* was a very ambitious film that didn't have an extraordinary budget, given the amount of work we had to accomplish. As a result, we constantly flip-flopped crews. Our rigging crew was always at least a location ahead, getting as much prepared for our arrival as possible. But we had an amazing Italian crew, with [gaffer] Stefano Morino, who has worked with people like Vittorio Storaro [ASC, AIC] in the past, and [key grip] Tino Malone. They were great for dealing with the logistical problems that we faced every day. In Venice, for example, everything had to be loaded onto boats, and we had to work pretty much completely on the water. In addition to camera boats, we had a boat for our generator and a boat for all of our gear. Working on the water makes the job a lot more physically challenging. To make matters worse, Italy was in the



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middle of their 'alte acqua,' which is a super high-tide that arrives in the winter and basically submerges parts of Venice. We were shooting in Piazza San Marco, and we had to wear hip boots because the waterline was a foot or two above the pavement. The Italian crews are fairly used to working under those conditions, though; they took everything in stride and really helped us pull through.

"We had quite a challenge when we were shooting on the Ponte San Angelo, which is the bridge in front of the castle of St. Angelo. The scene was a night exterior of a horse-drawn carriage ride, and we had to light a great deal of Italy in the background, including the Vatican itself. We brought in a bunch of Jumbos, which are 16 ACL (Aircraft Landing Light) lamps that run off of 28 volts each. I find those to be really good, power-efficient lights that can be softened easily. They're great for background lighting.

"Most of Italy nowadays is lit with sodium-vapor lights, which were nonexistent back in the Fifties," Flam notes, "We therefore found a color combination [⅛ CTO and full Plus Green on tungsten sources] to use on all of our lights to match the sodium lamps in the background. That sodium green would then be pulled out completely in the lab, and timed to create the color we wanted. With lights all over the surrounding area of Italy, that was a pretty elaborate job."

Another integral aspect of the film's style was the dynamic blocking of actors within the frame. Minghella explains, "Because the film is so much about which character is dominant at any given point, we talked at length about the framing of the film, and about having the balance of power shift within a frame. By having the actors moving into the frame rather than the frame moving towards the actors, we were able to control the balance of power in any given scene. For example, an actor might step closer to the camera and form his or her own close-up, thus taking the focus — either literally or metaphorically — away from another actor in the scene. You can play the game of who is partnering who inside the frame itself. The camera becomes an observer in those shifts of power."

Seale confirms, "I look for those types of things — moments when a shot can have power and strength. I look for a way to better tell the story in a shot. I'm a great believer in wanting to know why we are doing a particular shot. What is it doing for the film? Is it progressing the film, or is it simply covering action? From my perspective, each shot needs to progress the film. When it's all edited together, every



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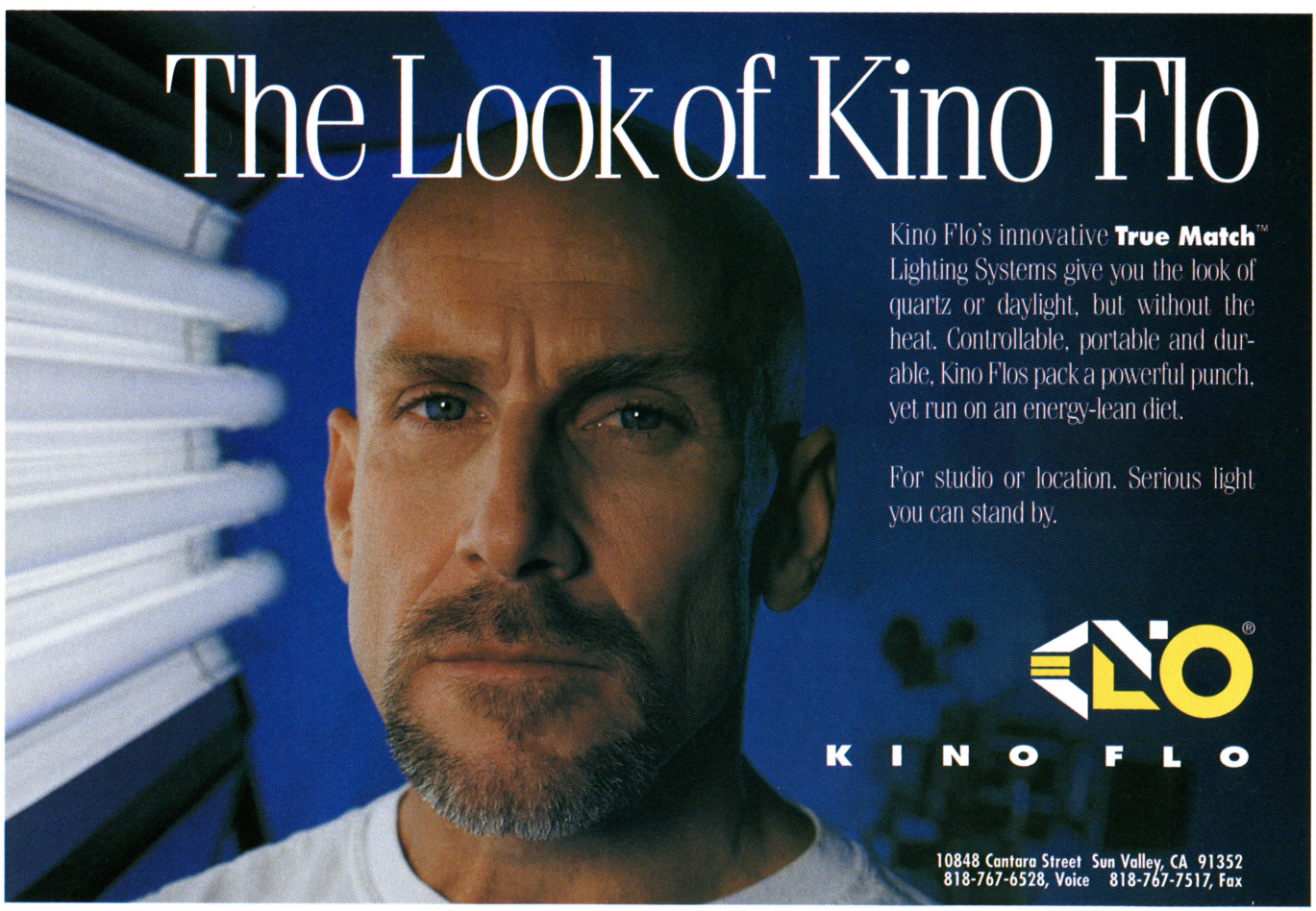
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shot should have its own power. If we're shooting a wide master that runs all the way through the scene, are they going to cut back to this same shot at the end? I find that very boring, because that means the last shot hasn't progressed the story any further. That's why I love the zoom, because even on a wide shot, I can push in slightly and change the frame a bit. These days, the audience's visual memory is very good, and viewers will know when you've gone back to exactly the same shot. They might not be able to tell you precisely what happened in the shot, but they can sense that they've already seen it. Over the years, while working with some wonderful directors, I've learned that you've got to stay ahead of your viewers. If they're ahead of you, then you're in deep trouble. You shouldn't even let the audience catch up if you can help it, because then there's no intrigue, and they're going to get bored. That's why every shot should have intrigue and a power of its own. If the audience is kept guessing, and they're involved visually, they're riveted! I think the cinematographer should help all he can in that respect, to keep the film moving in its final edit.

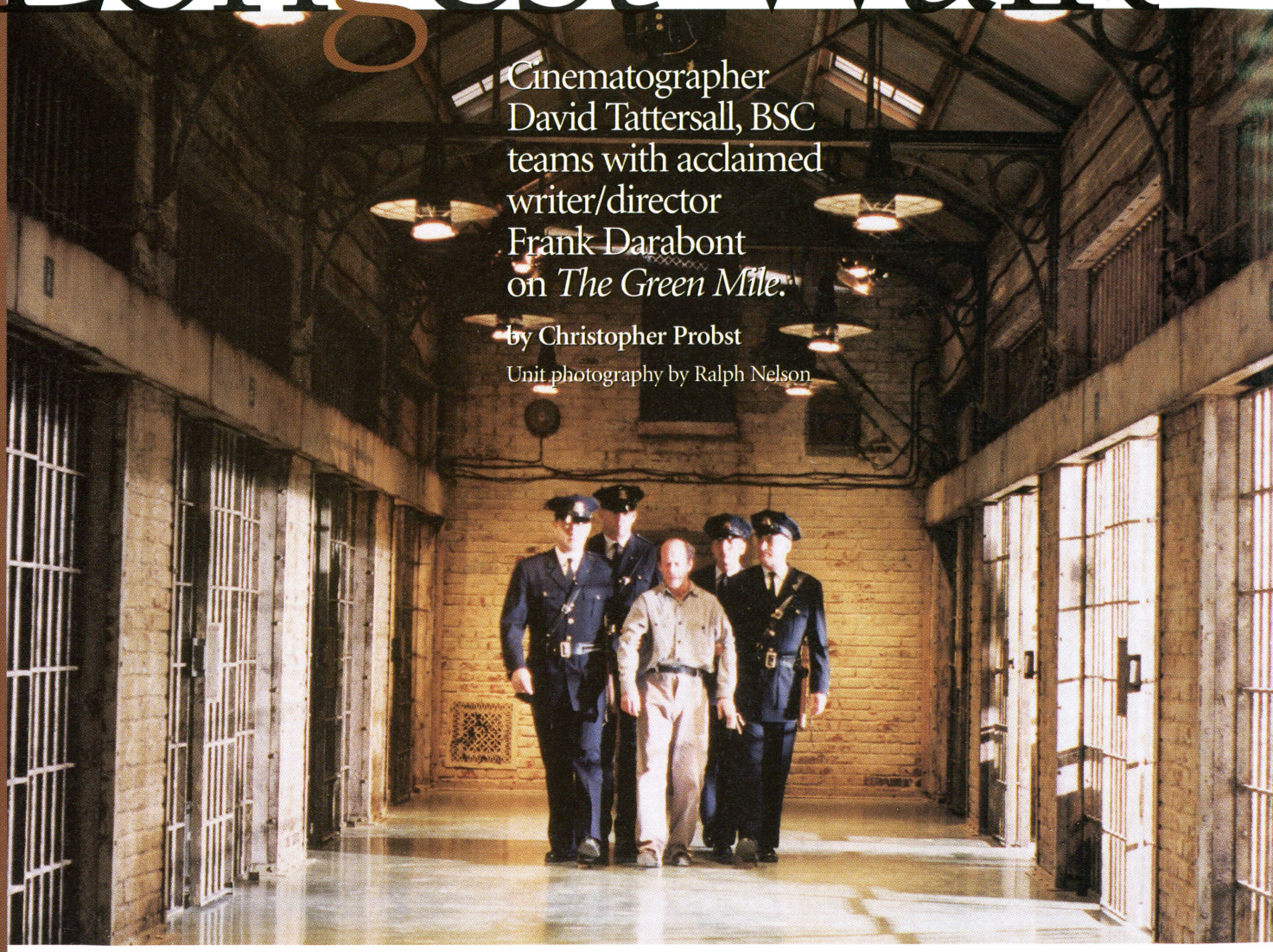


Boat-to-boat shooting in the canals of Venice proved tricky due to unusual tidal conditions, as well as the given logistical dilemmas inherent to water-borne filmmaking.

"All of those things came together on *Ripley*," Seale concludes. "The various elements are woven through a story where human beings get caught up in their own destinies. I love those types of movies — I love making them, and I love watching them. It's the real people and real life up on the screen that makes such stories compelling, and I'm always proud if I can capture a little piece of that reality." ■



The Longest Walk



Cinematographer David Tattersall, BSC teams with acclaimed writer/director Frank Darabont on *The Green Mile*.

by Christopher Probst

Unit photography by Ralph Nelson

In 1994, writer/director Frank Darabont impressed critics and audiences alike with his striking directorial debut, *The Shawshank Redemption*, an eloquent prison drama that illustrated the strength of the human spirit (see *AC* June '95). The picture earned seven Academy Award nominations, including nods for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Cinematography (by Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC). Some were surprised to learn that film was based on Stephen King's short story "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption," which appeared in his anthology *Different Seasons*.

Interestingly, Darabont once again chose to tap King's oeuvre for his follow-up picture, *The Green Mile* — which, oddly enough, is another period prison drama. Set in 1935, the narrative takes place in the death row cellblock of Cold Mountain Penitentiary in southern Georgia. (The phrase "Green Mile" refers to the final yards of green linoleum flooring leading from the small cellblock to the execution chamber.)

The tale is told in flashbacks



Opposite page: Death-row inmate Eduard Delacroix (Michael Jeter) is escorted to his high-voltage demise. This page: Darabont (far left) observes as head guard Paul Edgecomb (Tom Hanks) probes further into the past of condemned inmate John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan). "To establish the light in the prison," states gaffer Bobby Burton, "David was looking to create somewhat of a hot, period feel. The film is set in Georgia in the 1930s, so you could imagine what the heat must have been like in there without air-conditioning."

narrated by Paul Edgecomb (Tom Hanks), a former head guard of the Green Mile who recounts his remarkable encounter with condemned inmate John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan). The seven-foot-tall, 330-pound man was convicted of killing two nine-year-old girls, but Edgecomb discovers that Coffey also possesses a gift that allows him to see into people's lives and magically cure their ills or even bring a person back to life. This causes Edgecomb to doubt whether Coffey is actually guilty of the crime for which he's sentenced to die.

The director of photography on *The Green Mile*, David Tattersall, BSC, had never worked directly with Darabont before, but the two filmmakers shared a past that was linked in some ways. Much of Tattersall's earlier work was done in association with producer/director George Lucas, a close friend and collaborator of Darabont's. Tattersall shot over 30 episodes of Lucas's television show, *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, for which Darabont wrote several episodes (*AC* Oct. '92). Tattersall went on to shoot both *Radioland Murders* (*AC* Mar. '95) and *The Phantom Menace* (*AC* Sept. '99) for Lucas.

When it came time for the Darabont to select a cinematographer for *The Green Mile*, he consulted with Lucas and *Phantom Menace* producer Rick McCallum, both of whom gave Tattersall glowing recommendations. "Frank and I then had a series of meetings," Tattersall recalls. "Initially they were quite informal, but as we went along, they got more detailed as we started to talk about the cinematographic style and photographic look of the film. Frank showed me a big pile of photos and art references. In particular, we looked at a series of photographs that [still photographer] Walker Evans shot in Alabama during the Depression and mid-1930s. We also looked at a series of contemporary black-and-white platinum prints of black convicts and boxers shot by Albert Brooks, who is generally a fashion photographer. Those images had a particularly strong and graphic look that we tried to achieve when dealing with the character of John Coffey. Additionally, Edward Hopper's painting *Night Hawks* influenced the tone and color palette of the 'Green Mile' set at night, and Andrew Wyeth's tempera paintings suggested a mood idea for the farmyard and posse sequences."

In devising the look for the film, Darabont and Tattersall screened *Shawshank* to note any potential similarities in style that could occur between the two radically different stories. "*The Green Mile* is a rich, dense script packed with good, old-fashioned stuff — murder, magic, heroes and villains, a twisty-turny plot and a surprise ending," Tattersall relates. "Frank had been living with the script in his head for two or three years, and he had already formed pretty clear ideas about how the scenes might be shot — well before the crew was brought on board. He had ideas about the details in the choreography, and more than a rough idea of the coverage.

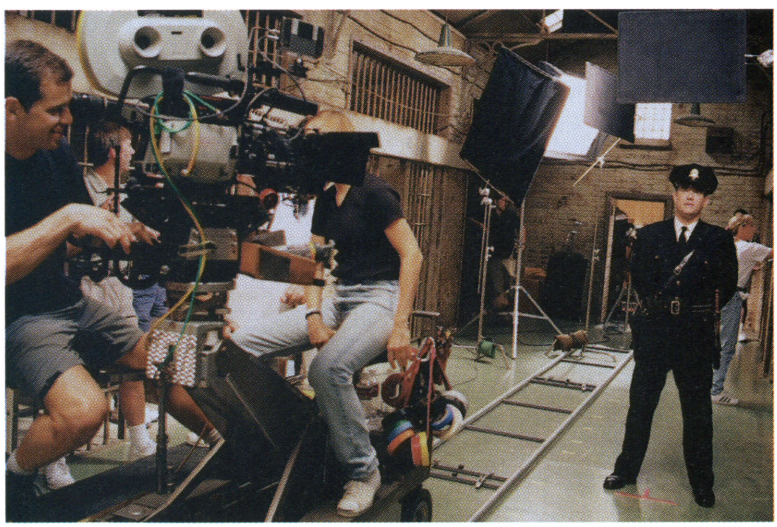
"The coverage on *Green Mile* is quite different from what was done on *Shawshank*, even thought the two films share a similar institutional ideas. There were many sequences in that film that had simple developing shots, or scenes that were elegantly covered in two or three angles. *The Green Mile*, with its more complicated narrative, has more leading characters, so by necessity Frank chose a shooting style involving more close-up coverage together with less-traditional funky ideas, so this film will probably come across as a bit more 'cutty.'"

Darabont envisioned clean, naturalistic visuals for *The Green Mile*, eschewing the sepia tints and gauzy filtration commonly seen in

Photos courtesy of Castlerock/Warner Bros.

The Longest Walk





Right: Edgecomb keeps the watch on the Mile. The detailed Green Mile interiors were constructed on stages at Warner Hollywood Center Studios under the attentive eye of Oscar-winning production designer Terence Marsh. Much of the lighting was created outside the set walls to achieve as "practical" a look as possible. "However," adds Burton, "when we'd get into close-ups of the actors [as in the photo below], we'd often use 2K and 5K lamps with Chimeras from stands on the floor. Even though the scene may have been daylight, the only 'real' light coming in was a soft ambience, so the Chimeras continued that [look] well." Bottom, right: A-camera operator David Emmerichs frames up Tom Hanks.

period pictures. "A common general fault is thinking that a period film has to be *treated* in some way; whether that means using diffusion filters or some processing effect to soften or give an impression of time or distance from the subject matter," Tattersall submits. "Historically, photographic manipulation has created some very strong images — the flashing Vilmos Zsigmond [ASC] did on *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, Freddie Francis [BSC]'s use of black-and-white on *The Elephant Man*, or Janusz Kaminski [ASC]'s pronounced use of ENR on *Saving Private Ryan* — but with this film, Frank wanted to be more naturalistic and make it as believable as possible; because of the magical elements in the script, the story was already slightly fantastic. If we could make the imagery more believable, the narrative would work that much better. In our early discussions, we determined that the visuals were going to be an exercise in restraint. We sought to hold back a bit and resist the temptations that immediately come to mind in this sort of setting — such as using the cell bars to create zebra-stripe shadow patterns, which could easily become tiresome, or adopting a film-noir style. We also avoided using atmospheric smoke on the sets, reserving it for special occasions. Smoke has become a really overused technique that isn't always employed for the right reasons. We wanted to avoid those sorts of clichés and go with a softer, less disruptive look. With a script this good, so perfectly balanced with such a well-chosen cast, the film didn't need propping up with 'in-your-face' cinematography."

This naturalistic approach led the filmmakers to shoot the film in the standard 1.85:1 aspect ratio. "Frank feels that anamorphic [widescreen] is more suited to a James Bond film than an intimate drama like *The Green Mile*," Tattersall explains. The cameraman shot with Panavision Platinums for the A and B cameras and utilized Primo primes — ranging from 14.5mm to 150mm — and the T2.8 11:1 (24-275mm) Primo zoom for some of the film's location exterior work. Additional 'toys' were occasionally employed on a as-needed basis — the Frazier lens was used to achieve some POV angles of the film's hero mouse, Mr. Jingles, and a Libra III remote head was utilized to create a more floaty

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THE GREEN MILE



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The Longest Walk



Right: Director of photography David Tattersall on location in Tennessee while shooting one of the film's exterior scenes. Below: Bookended with present-day sequences depicting an elderly Edgecomb living a residence home, *The Green Mile* uses flashbacks to recount the character's tenure as head guard on death row. An elaborate Akela crane shot introduces the film's fictional setting, Cold Mountain Penitentiary.

feel for some of the film's 'magic' moments.

Tattersall shot the film almost entirely on Eastman Kodak Vision 320T 5277, employing the softer-contrast stock for all interior day and night sequences. However, the film's exterior day sequences were shot on daylight-balanced EXR 5245.

The company began the shoot at Warner Hollywood Center Studios, where production designer Terence Marsh (who had collaborated with Darabont on *Shawshank*) constructed sets depicting the Green Mile and several home interiors, as well as a warehouse that is converted by the film's characters into a makeshift movie theater. "About 50 percent of the film takes place on the Green Mile, and the set Terence built was awe-inspiring," Tattersall says. "The attention to detail was scary — walking down the set really gave you the impression of 80 years of flaky paint, crude Victorian-era plumbing, frayed Edison-style wiring and rusty iron bars. Early on, Frank had a background in the art department, which has no doubt influenced the carefully thought-out set details and dressing. The set itself consisted of nine cells, a little office space [at the end of the corridor] and a small execution chamber [that doubles as a ratty storage room when not in use]. It had a tin [A-frame style] roof that featured a series of skylights in two rows running down each side of the main corridor.

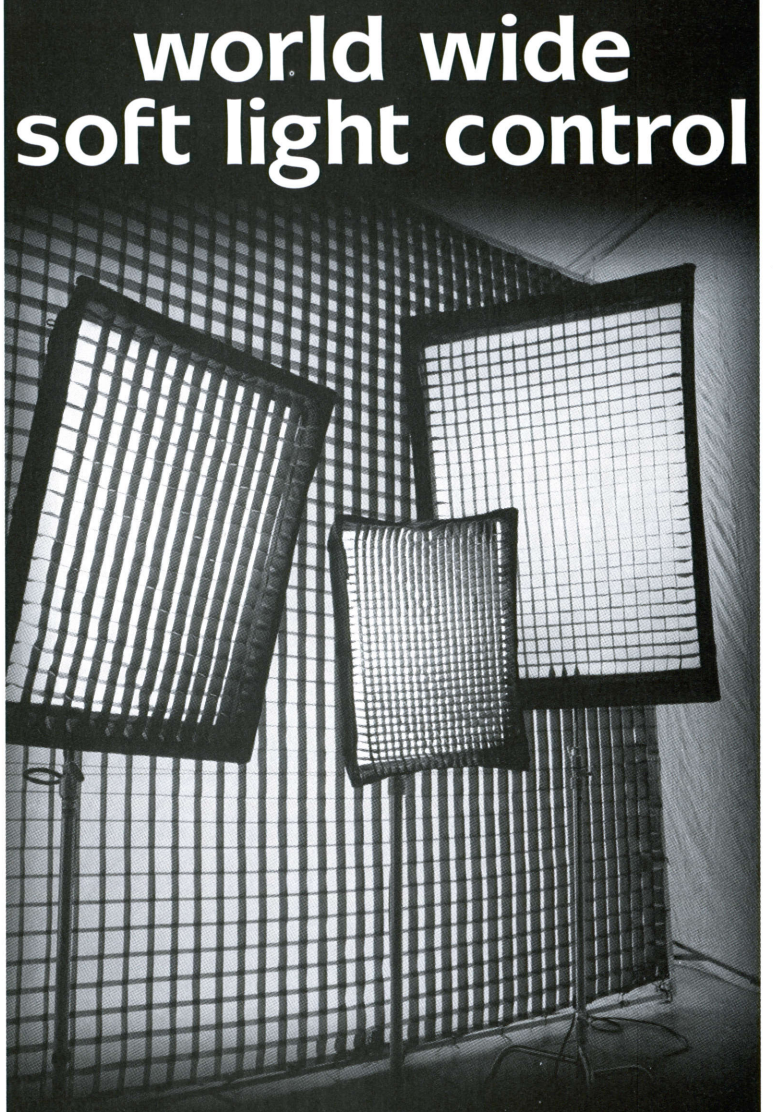
"We were all keen to keep the set as practical as possible," the cinematographer continues. "In my quest for a natural look, I strove to light the entire set from outside, without having to float the roof or the walls. That may have been an optimistic or even naive idea, but the plan was to build a lighting rig with enough firepower and versatility to cover the set from all directions and for all occasions.

"Above the series of skylights, we hung 60' by 8' wooden diffusion frames that ran the length of the corridor on both sides. One of the frames was covered with 129 diffusion and ¼ CTB, while the other was covered with 250. That way, one side was denser and colder than other. Above these frames, we had two gantries that supported lines of nine-light Mini-Brutes. All of those lamps were on separate dimmer channels and could be easily controlled from the floor box. We could easily simulate dull to quite-bright overcast light. Above all of that was a third gantry that supported half-corrected 4K Xenon spotlights that occasionally allowed us to create the look of direct sunlight — we'd just slide the diffusion frames out to get crisper sense of the light. There was enough kilowattage up there to melt the roof!"

Gaffer Bobby Burton, who worked with Tattersall on both *Soldier* and *Con Air*, notes that "David likes to use Mini- and Maxi-Brutes because if you're going to soften them, you have a lot more control [beyond just dimming them]. You can turn on one or two globes, or go all the way up to nine. For the main window at the end of the Green Mile corridor, [which is often featured in-shot], we experimented with several different units, but David decided mainly to use a combination of nine-light Mini- and Maxi-Brutes. We had the Maxi-Brutes dead-center on the window, and then came in from each side on



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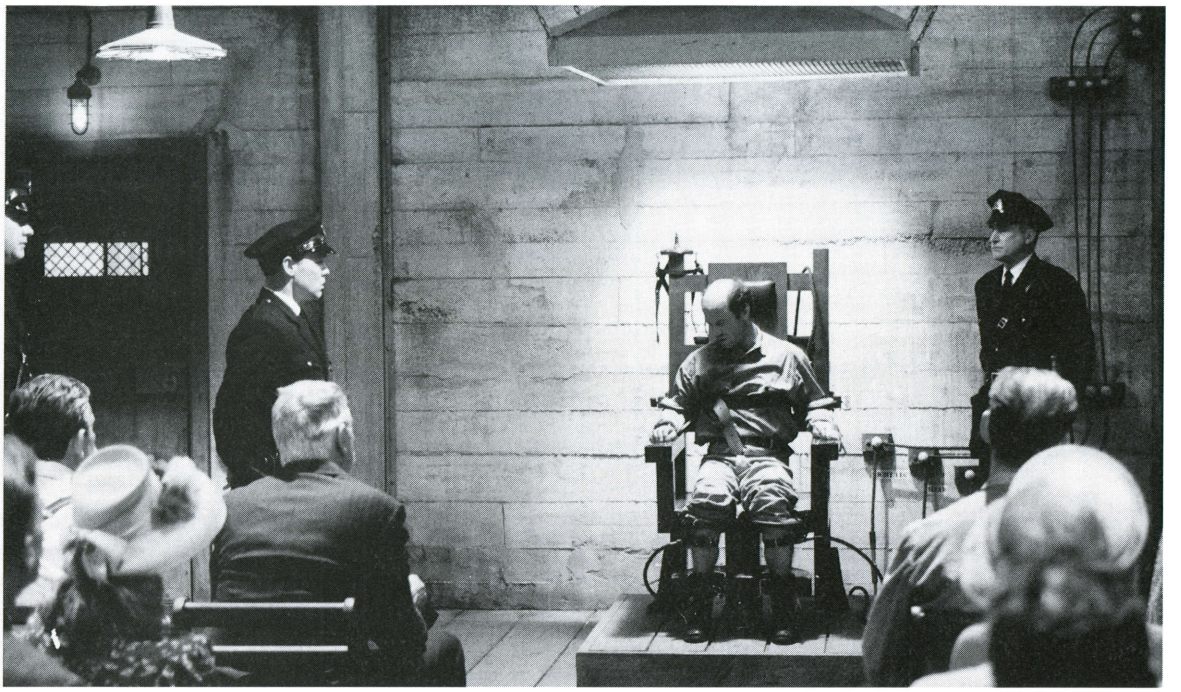
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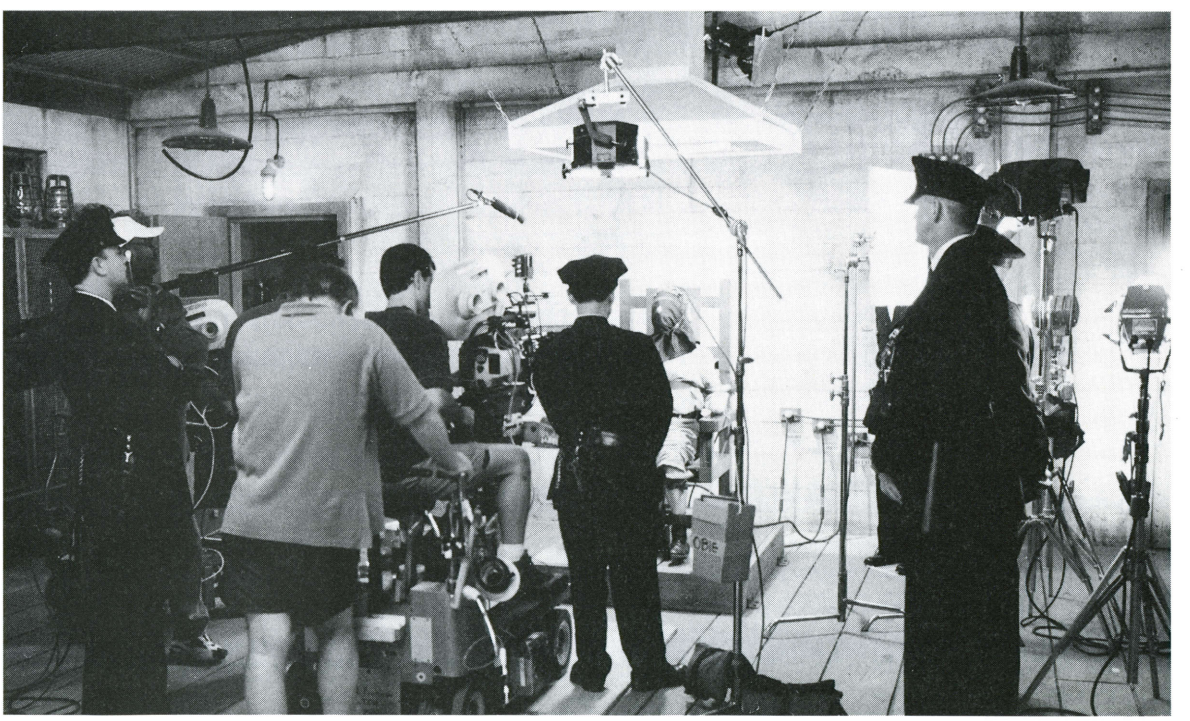
The Longest Walk



Right: During his harrowing execution, Delacroix endures an even more horrid fate than expected when malicious guard Percy Wetmore (Doug Hutchinson) intentionally sabotages the process, causing the inmate to literally "fry." Below: While shooting the sequence, Tattersall used 90- and 45-degree shutter angles to help enhance the scene's shocking horror.

an angle with a nine-light Mini."

Although the "exterior" lighting system for the Green Mile set did provide the vast majority of the daylight lighting, adjustments and augmentations were needed within the structure to finesse the look. "There were several covered nooks and crannies in the set that were quite dark and needed help from inside," Tattersall admits. "We often hid single or double Kino Flo tubes judiciously around the set to help lift up the shadows. Naturally, once you get into the everyday nitty-gritty of filming, you always come across little lighting problems that are difficult to predict. For instance, occasionally we'd have a scene in which all of the guards were wearing their duty caps. Within our top-lit set, the light didn't work really well [on their faces]. On those occasions, we brought lights out onto the floor. Bobby introduced me to [2K and 5K] Chimera softboxes, which were the perfect way to deal with this set. We could get a nice,



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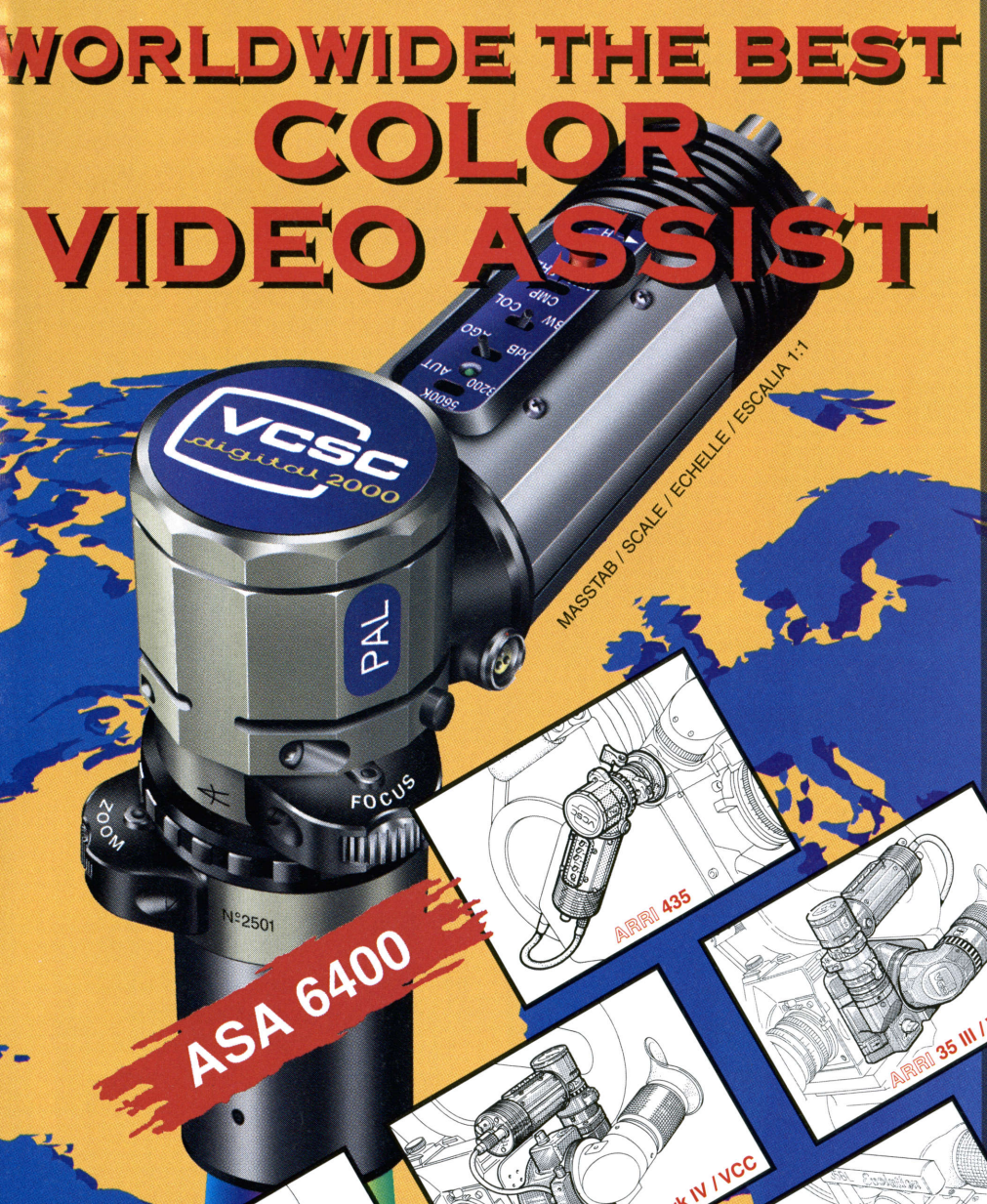
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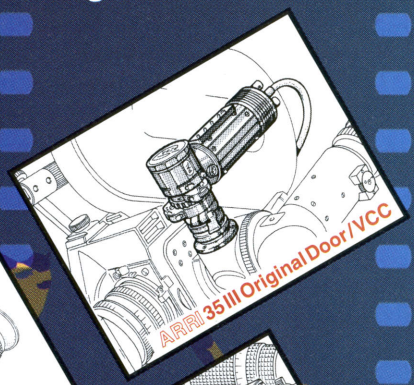
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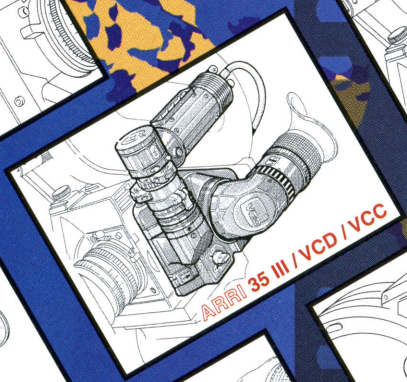
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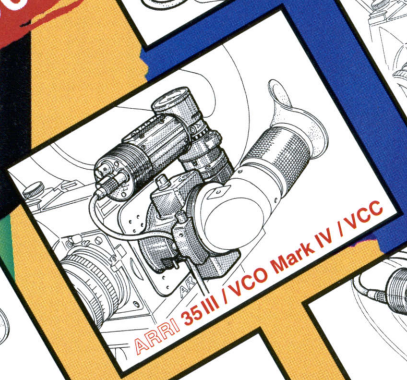
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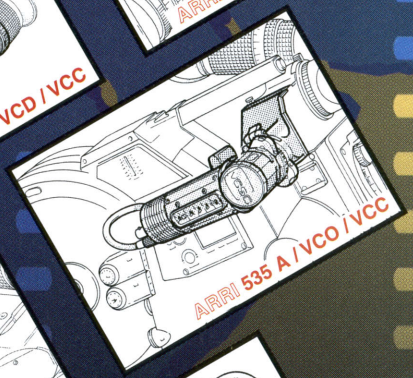


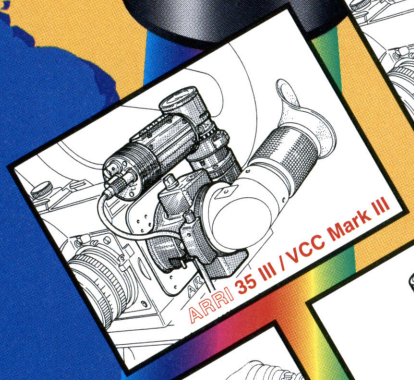
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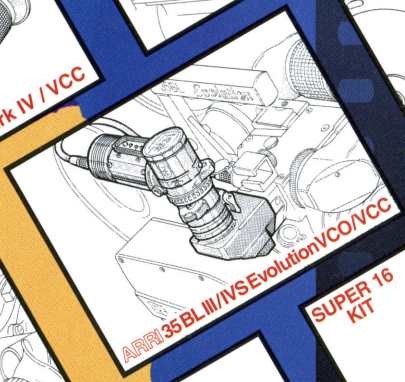


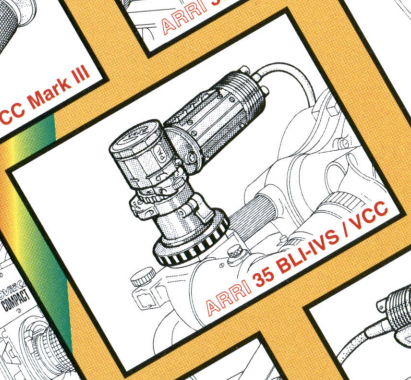


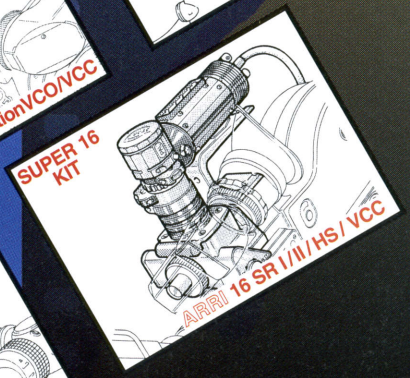


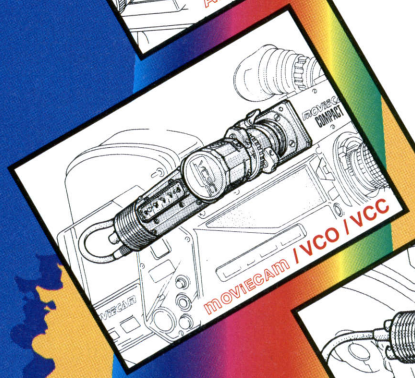


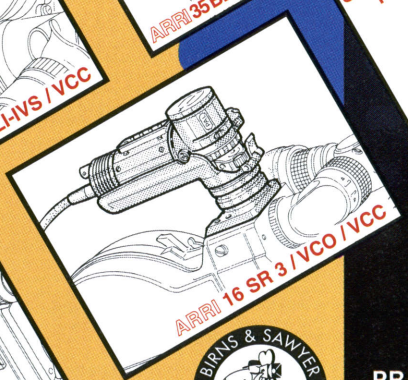


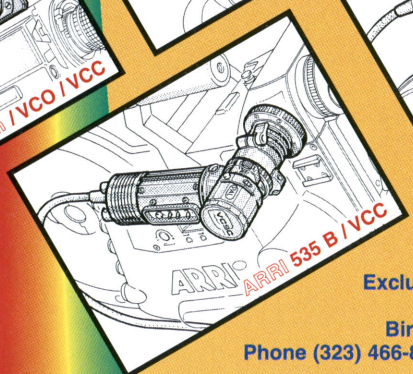












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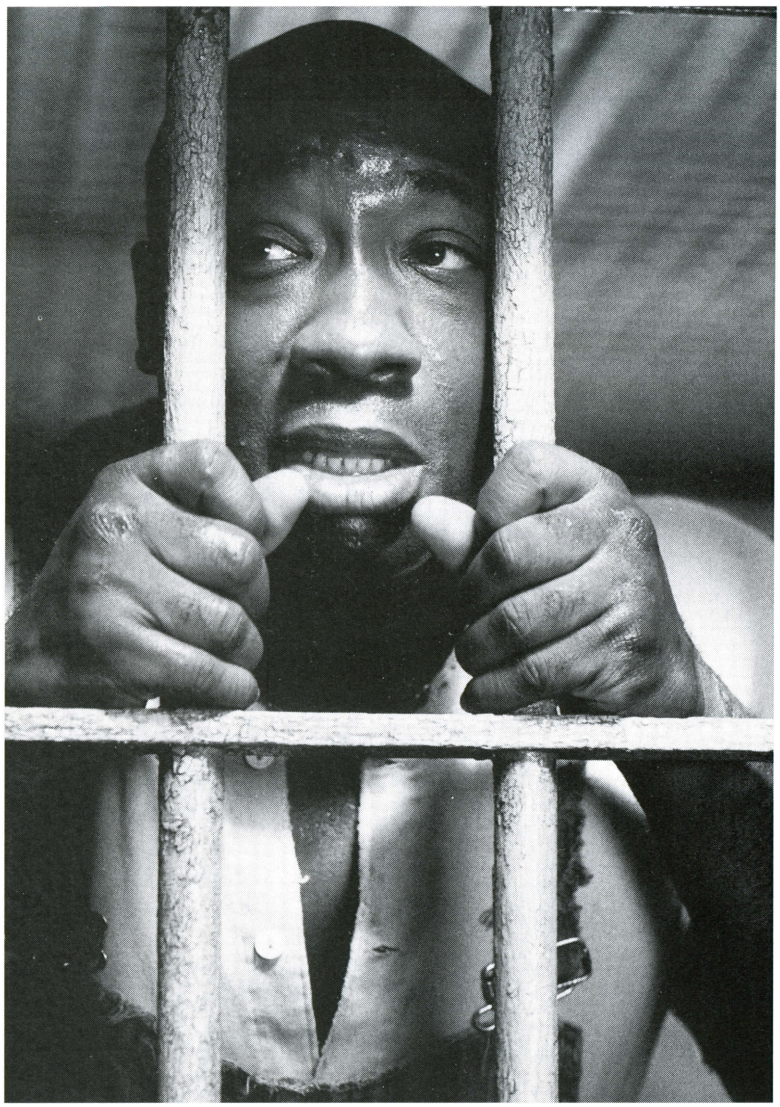
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The Longest Walk



Sentenced to die for a crime he may not have committed, the hulking but simpleminded Coffey proves that appearances can be deceiving. Tattersall noted that cell bars presented a particular challenge when the crew was shooting dialogue scenes involving the inmates and guards. "The bars were tricky, because they were just a bit too tight to shoot a close-up and fit both eyes [comfortably] between the bars," says Tattersall. "We found that being closer to the bars with wider lenses helped, especially if we were photographing three or four characters through the bars."

soft light — which we played a little more as a top, front fill to get light under their caps — without the forest of stands that would normally be needed."

The inmates' cells also required additional units to lift them out of the shadows. "We had double and single 4' fluorescents over the tops of each cell for a little bit of ambiance," notes Burton. "With so many tubes placed everywhere, we elected to get away from using whole Kino Flo units with their ballasts and light harnesses. [Using Optima 32 tubes,] we built our own units, using commercial-grade A-series transformers that are super quiet, and running them off of stingers. Each transformer powered four 4' tubes, so we'd put one tube in one cell, run a little zip-cord extension over to another cell for another tube, and so on.

"Each of the cells on the set also had a small, wire-meshed window, which we frosted with some 250 diffusion," Burton continues. "For our daylight effect, we used a 10K aimed down through the windows to give us a strong directional light. We'd then use a 5K coming in on another angle to create a little slash across the walls, which we could play against the dark side of a face."

Extensive adjustments were required for the filming of nighttime sequences on the Green Mile set. "Although we had varying types of daylight, there were really the two primary looks for the Green Mile set: day and night," Tattersall submits. "At night, the set was [ostensibly] lit by practicals and China hats fitted with replica 1930s-style Edison light bulbs, which are clear and have a single [visible] filament inside."

Adds Burton, "At night, we'd cool the windows a bit with maybe a ¼ blue and use one globe on the Maxi to see just a glint of something out there. Inside, we had eight or 12 China hats hanging down with the period globes in them. We enhanced the light from those with small units from above. However, if the camera was going to see above the China hats, we'd light the nice structural work they'd done in the rafters. To do that, we hid a few 8' fluorescent tubes behind the I-beams that spanned the hallway. For wide shots, we'd hang some 2K juniors up high in the A-frame of the roof on special brackets. We also used some 4K and 2K Zip lights with egg crates that we could both play as softer frontal light or backlight, depending on which direction we were shooting toward and whether we wanted the scene to be moody with silhouettes, or more straightforward. We also tried to have the back wall behind the desk lit up so we could silhouette things against it.

"The lighting motivation for the night scenes was mainly determined by the cells and the hallway," Burton continues. "In addition to the China hats, the cells had a practical fixtures above the bars on each side that essentially looked like two bare bulbs. If we saw them in-shot, we'd play the bulb down on the dimmer and then continue a source of light from that direction — using a Pepper, Inkies or Tweenies, or even a Baby or a 2K.

"For night through the cell's windows, we would bounce a tweenie with ½ blue into a beadboard right over the window, which would

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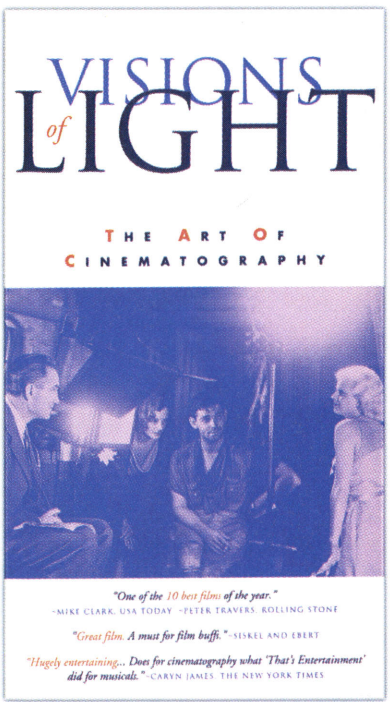
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The Longest Walk

add just a touch of moonlight. It was never really a 'Hollywood' moonlight; it was almost invisible. Finally, for fill, we'd usually bounce into a 4' by 4' beadboard over the top."

The Green Mile features some harrowing and occasionally gruesome depictions of executions in an electric chair. "For the executions, we had some pretty scary reference material," Tattersall recounts. "Accordingly, the procedures and details that we were shooting were historically accurate to executions that took place in 1935. Gruesome though it seems, mishaps did sometimes occur, with pretty horrendous results. Occasionally, the convict would burst into flames, usually in front of an invited audience. This in fact happens to one of our inmates in the film.

"For that scene, we lent the images a more violent edge by shooting with 90- and 45-degree shutters. When the lever was thrown, the convict basically arcs the current, so he is violently thrown about, even though he's strapped to the chair. We used the different shutter angles to accentuate that effect."

"The execution chamber was primarily played in the daytime," Burton expands. "There were windows up above it that were lit with Maxis. There was a direct light from a vent over the chair, and the rest the area around [the inmate] was dark. China hats lit the audience. Again, we enhanced [the light] from the China hats with brighter units hidden above. In cases where we didn't see the bulbs in these lamps, we'd also put a brighter bulb in them and use them as the actual source.

"The nighttime scenes in the chamber were mostly lit with the China hats, as well as a lot of additional overhead light from Babies and Juniors. At one end of the room there were two big barnlike doors, outside of which we hung a black backing. The backing was about 40' from the doors, and we spaced some

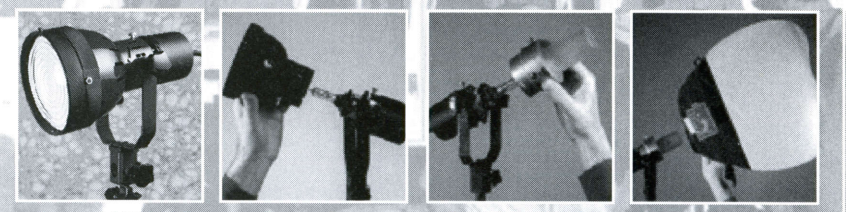
Christmas-tree lights out in different areas so that when the camera saw beyond the doors, the small fixtures looked like the lights of buildings in the distance."

A key moment in *The Green Mile*'s narrative occurs when Coffey is granted a final wish prior to his execution: to see a movie for the first time. The guards clear out a warehouse and set up a makeshift theater for Coffey to view the musical *Top Hat,* starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. "We shot that scene in the mill across from the stages at Hollywood Center," notes Burton. "It was a fairly dark room, with only the light from the screen coming back at [actor Michael Clarke Duncan]. The film being shown on the screen was black-and-white film, and the scene was set at night, so we played the light a bit on the blue side. There were windows on both sides of the warehouse, and to light through them, we used some large HMIs — 18K, 12K and 6Ks — which we bounced off the stage walls outside. That ambiance lit the windows, but it wasn't overpowering. The stage walls were a cream color, but the light coming through the windows still appeared to be blue because of the [uncorrected] HMIs. We also had a couple of China-hat practicals off in the corners of the mill here and there, just for depth.

"For close-ups on Coffey while he's watching the film, we created a front light for him by bouncing either a 5K or a 10K into a 12' by 12' sheet of bleached muslin. We'd then wave a flags in front of the lamp to create a bit of fluctuation in the light on his face. We set up a Xenon projector in the background to complete the illusion."

Sequences depicting Coffey's magical ability to see into people's lives allowed the filmmakers to make a distinct break from their generally naturalistic visual strategy. "Those sequences were meant to be unclear," Tattersall reveals. "We shot at 12 fps

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and then step-printed to the equivalent of 48 fps. The effect is a bit blurry and has an impressionistic, slightly imperfect quality that's quite effective. Also, we revisit those sequences several times though different perspectives, and they change each time. Sometimes they're sentimental, or more brooding and ominous. Occasionally they're very bright, and other times they're very dark. The flashbacks change based on the perception of the memory at a given point in the story."

Adds Burton, "For the magical moments, we created some interactive lighting to help out the effects people. For example, we had some low-voltage, high-output globes that we used to create a glow in one character's hand."

After almost eight solid weeks of working on the *Green Mile* sets in Hollywood, the filmmakers were paroled for three weeks of location shooting in and around Nashville, Tennessee. "Although Tennessee gave us some beautiful locations, it was a surprisingly dangerous place to shoot," Tattersall relates. "We had some real problems with chiggers and ticks. If you sit down on a nest of chiggers, you risk untold misery as they burrow into your skin, while ticks can give you the unspeakably foul and dreaded Lyme disease. There was also an amazing variety of poisonous snakes, including copperheads and cottonmouths, as well as spiders. At one point we were shooting in a barn that was infested with brown recluse spiders [a highly toxic, venomous arachnid] — one nip from those little critters and your arm falls off or you lapse into a coma. It reminded me of shooting in the African jungle. We really had to keep our eyes open for all of these dangerous things, and we were only 30 minutes outside of Nashville!"

Despite these hazards, Tennessee provided a crucial visual element for the film: an appropriate exterior for the fictional Cold Mountain Penitentiary. Darabont elected to revisit a site that was originally scouted for *The Shawshank Redemption.* "We shot our prison exteriors at a nearly disbanded prison just outside Nashville," says Tattersall. "The main prison block is over 120 years old, and has a magnificently out-of-place gothic facade with turrets and spires. Early on in the film, we had to establish this amazingly gothic 1890s prison, and Frank choreographed a shot that starts low on the ground, looking across a plowed field with all of these convicts digging it up with pickaxes and shovels. The camera was mounted on an Akela crane with a

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Libra III head. In the shot, it skims the ground and then rises up over this field of 350 extras with a big steam-driven rock crusher and guards on horseback in the background. In the far background of the shot, the camera picks up a prison truck as we fly over the extras. As the camera gets closer to the truck, it draws through this little grouping of trees and rises up to reveal the prison in the distance. We planned that introductory crane shot to be filmed in early morning, just as the sun was rising over a distant range of hills and backlighting all of these convicts — as well as the dust they were kicking up. One often doesn't have a choice when dealing with weather, but we had more than our fair share of good weather during the three weeks we were in Tennessee. Most of our exteriors were shot in glorious sunlight."

Burton expands, "Our standard look outside was to fill with white 12' by 12's or build two or three HMI platforms on scissorlifts that we could drive around. We could then put a diffusion frame in front of them — like a 12' by 12' of Silent Frost or gridcloth — or play the light hard. At night, we used Condors to get a high moonlight or a high source, but in those days you didn't have a lot of streetlights. We had old-style cars with their headlights, so we played things pretty sketchy."

The Green Mile's present-day bookend sequences were filmed after the main production wrapped. At that point, Tattersall had gone on location in New Zealand to shoot the mountaineering thriller *Vertical Limit*, so Gabriel Beristain, BSC, another alumnus of Stephen King film work (*Dolores Claiborne*) took over the camerawork.

Tattersall notes that he welcomes the disparate challenges that his last few pictures have offered him. "After *The Phantom Menace* and *Soldier*, it was nice to be involved with a project like *The Green Mile*, which didn't involve any bluescreens," he says. "Instead, we were dealing with period set dressings and costumes in tighter, more intimate spaces. The project I'm involved with right now, *Vertical Limit*, is another situation altogether. High-altitude photography and dealing with mountain weather is really tricky, but at least there aren't any chiggers trying to bite you in the ass!" ■



An Unfettered Imagination

Director Frank Darabont lends his literate sensibility to *The Green Mile.*

by Ron Magid

Unit photography by Ralph Nelson



Photos courtesy of Castlerock/Warner Bros.

Frank Darabont is a true child of the cinema. From an early age, he feasted on a steady diet of movies, and as a young adult, he began learning the techniques that would help him achieve his goal of becoming a director. Few people realize that before helming his Oscar-nominated feature debut, *The Shawshank Redemption,* Darabont had worked on a number of pictures in various capacities, including stints as a transportation captain and a set dresser (most notably on Ken Russell's outrageous 1984 psychosexual thriller *Crimes of Passion,* which required a number of memorably salacious props).

The string of odd jobs ended in 1987, when Darabont sold his first screenplay, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors.* He followed up with scripts for a gooey remake of *The Blob,* the horror sequel *The Fly II* and then *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.* Along the way, Darabont also wrote episodes of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles,* an experience that enabled him to learn about the up-and-coming power of digital effects from George Lucas himself.

Darabont gained more experience by directing a few television films, including *Buried Alive II* and *Till Death Do Us Part* (both 1990),

but it wasn't until four years later, after studio executives read his adaptation of Stephen King's *The Shawshank Redemption,* that he acquired the clout to direct a major feature film. *Shawshank* earned a total of seven Oscar nominations (including nods for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Cinematography) and a Golden Globe nomination (for Best Adapted Screenplay), and also netted Darabont the Humanitas Prize and the USC Scripter Award.

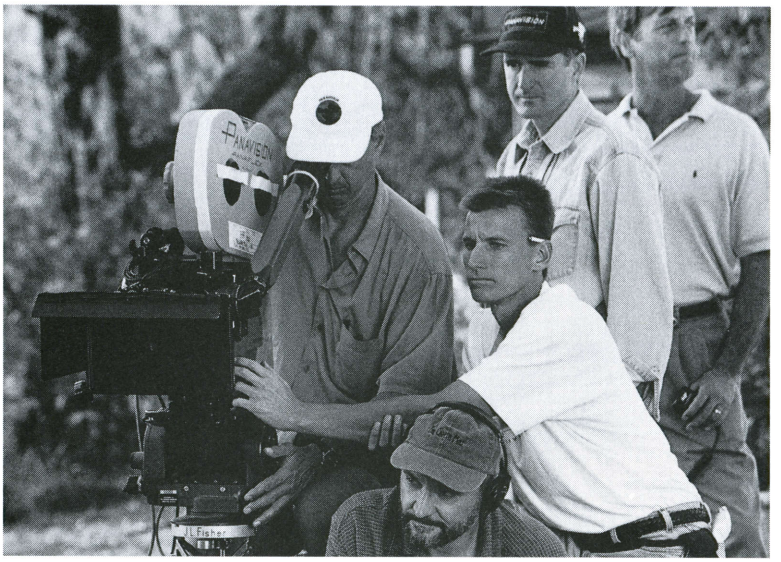
After wrapping production on *The Green Mile,* his latest adaptation of a Stephen King prison drama, Darabont offered *AC* his insights about the project.

Why did you choose David Tattersall [BSC] to photograph *The Green Mile*?

Darabont: I considered a number of good cinematographers. Certainly the rave recommendations that David got from George Lucas and [*Phantom Menace* producer] Rick McCallum, who think the world of him, were a factor. I've been following David's work because he shot most of the *Young Indiana Jones* series, working in a wide variety of styles — he's really versatile. But ultimately, what it boiled down to was his work on the feature *Moll Flanders,* which was beautifully photographed. I remembered being knocked out by how he shot it, and I couldn't help thinking that if the film had had a higher visibility, it might have gotten an Oscar nomination for Best Cinematography. I rescreened it and thought to myself, 'My God, if he can make this picture look so good on such a low budget, then I think he could be the guy for me.' He was, and I really enjoyed working with him.

Did you also want a different cinematographer so that your second Stephen King prison drama would have a different look and feel than *Shawshank*?

Darabont: Absolutely.



Opposite: Flanked by Green Mile guards Brutus "Brutal" Howell and Paul Edgecomb (David Morse and Tom Hanks), condemned inmate John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan), proves to be a magical contradiction. This page: Writer/director Frank Darabont (foreground) observes the action while operator Bobby La Bonge and first assistant Jonathan Yirak man the camera under the watchful eye of cinematographer David Tattersall (in dark cap).

Did you consider simply hiring Roger Deakins [ASC] again?

Darabont: I did consider it for awhile. Roger is a brilliant cinematographer, but I wanted to try to avoid repeating *Shawshank* in certain ways. There are a few actors who transitioned from *Shawshank* to this picture, but I didn't want to recycle my entire cast. I was very selective about that, and about the technical side of things too. I didn't want to wind up with a movie that looked the same.

In your view, how does the look differ from that of *Shawshank*?

Darabont: It's still very pretty, but perhaps it's a tad less 'painterly,' if you will. I guess gritty would be the word I would use. It's still very beautiful, though; David lights like an angel.

Were there any other challenges that stemmed from the fact that you were adapting another prison story by Stephen King?

Darabont: I don't think so, because the two stories are *very* different. In and of itself, of course, the movie was an enormous challenge to make, but the fact that it was another prison movie didn't really have anything to do with it. In terms of our approach to the material, *Shawshank* was a sprawling story told on an enormous canvas, while *The Green Mile* uses a smaller canvas.

Is that because *The Green Mile* takes place in a much more confined area of the prison than *Shawshank*?

Darabont: Right. When we're in the prison, we're not able to show a bunch of guys in the exercise yard — we're within the same cellblock all the time. The key setting is an eight-cell block that was ultimately a very claustrophobic place to shoot, and it was certainly a challenge to keep the visuals interesting from scene to scene. We also had to try to keep ourselves fresh while going to the same place day after day — in that type of situation, keeping the energy up can sometimes be tough. You become a bit like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*!

How long did you shoot on that set?

Darabont: We were on those stages for about four months, and I would say that we probably spent more than three months of that time on the same set. David did a great job, but there were days when you just wanted to throw a rope over the beams and hang yourself there rather than go back! It was tough. The amount of coverage required to do a simple scene of a guy talking was far greater; we wound up shooting from an enormous number of angles.

Did you do that because you

An Unfettered Imagination



Edgecomb and inmate Arlen Bitterbuck (Graham Greene) discuss the concept of heaven. Darabont describes the elaborate yet confined Death Row set as "ultimately a very claustrophobic place to shoot," adding that "it was certainly a challenge to keep the visuals interesting from scene to scene."

were showing the same location again and again?

Darabont: No, we worked that way because it was a location that actually defined a different kind of shot. On *Shawshank,* if I had a scene involving eight guys in the exercise yard, we'd shoot a master and go in for some coverage, and that was it. On *The Green Mile,* we've got eight characters [in the cellblock], and it's all about the geography of where these guys are moving around — a geography that is defined by separation, because the realism here stems from being in their very individual cells. Plus, we have one character who's taller than everybody else, which also impacted the shots.

I understand that your visual effects supervisor, Charles Gibson, brought in ILM — and three other effects houses — to handle certain delicate effects, right on the heels of *Star Wars: Episode I.* I assume your film has a different tone than *The Phantom Menace.*

Darabont: [Laughs] Oh, God! About as different as you can get! In *Phantom Menace,* George had these very delightful, obviously effects-generated characters, and that's part of the fun of watching the movie. I loved [the alien junk dealer] Watto, but in some part of your brain you know he's an effect. In my movie, it was a matter of making the effects as subtle as possible, as opposed to really obvious effects. In a way, though, we were trying to do the same thing George did, because he was attempting to seamlessly integrate his effects into the narrative. He was trying to convince viewers that the events onscreen were real, which is the same thing that we're doing, on a less epic scale. In addition to the the obvious effects in *Phantom Menace,* George used a lot of invisible effects that you don't notice. He was doing stuff digitally that was mind-blowing — changing people's eyelines, stuff like that.

I remember having a conversation with George about digital effects when I was working on the *Young Indiana Jones* series, which was a test-bed for computer-generated effects. At that time, around 1990-91, George was already sampling images the way music producers were sampling sounds, and then plugging them into the show. I remember being really knocked out by the stuff he was doing, like taking six extras on horseback and turning them into 200, that sort of thing. I said to him at one point, 'If it's really just a matter of memory in the computer that is preventing us from actually doing this on film, do you really think that someday you'll actually be able to do this in a movie?' He replied, 'Oh, yeah, sure! The day will come!' I was thinking that we'd see that day in 10 years — I didn't know he meant next week. A year later, we were watching dinosaurs stomping around in [Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*].

What I love about this technology is we were able to pull off some illusions in the spirit of what's by now 'old hat' — things like erasing cables in *Terminator 2* so Arnold Schwarzenegger's character would look as if he was making the world's biggest motorcycle jump. Those kinds of techniques, which by now are actually fairly simple, really helped me tell the story in ways that I wouldn't have been able to a year or so ago.

On the simplest level, say I've got my best take of Tom Hanks, David Morton and Barry Pepper walking into a tiny padded room looking for a mouse. They've got some dialogue, and we've basically got to get the scene in one take without any coverage, because it doesn't require it. Let's say that in my best take, where all of the actors are terrific, the mike-boom guy shifts, and suddenly a boom shadow is sort of scurrying across the wall. Well, 10 years ago or however long ago, I would've had to live with it, or be satisfied with a lesser take. Now, I can turn to Charlie Gibson and say, 'Can you erase that shadow please?' and it's gone! As another example, let's say we have a beautiful dolly shot with a bump in the middle of it: guess what, we can straighten it out!

In my opinion, digital technology is truly a wonderful thing. There's one night scene where we shot this guy scurrying across the road on location in Tennessee, and we had the luxury of painting in an absolutely perfect landscape with a full moon and stars in the sky, adding a tree line, and completely reinventing the shot to suit our design. I don't think I ever could have gotten that shot in real life.

Did you do any shots where you actually blended a performance from one take with a performance from another take?

Darabont: There is one shot like that in the movie, but there's

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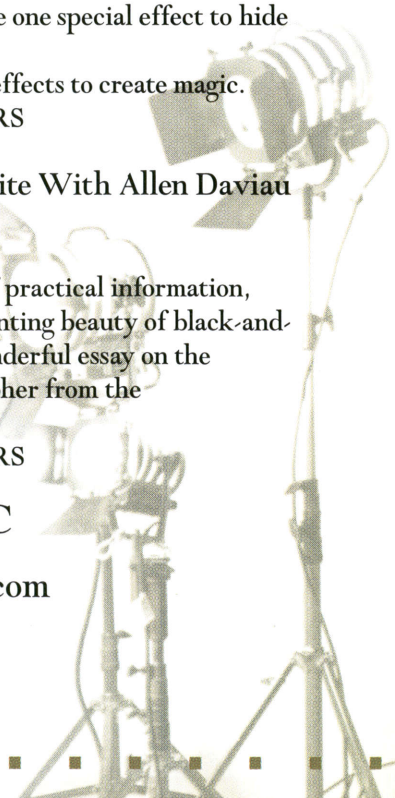
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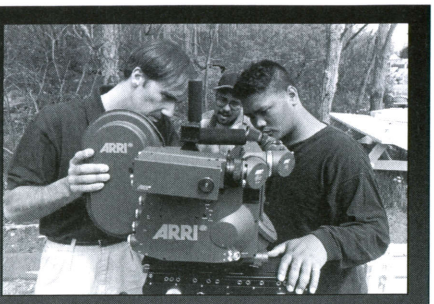
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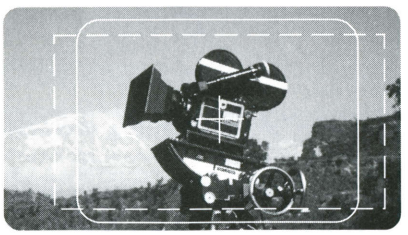
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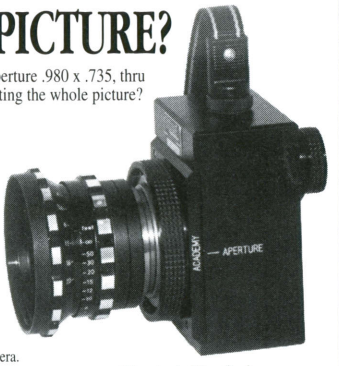
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another effect going on as well, so you'll see the shot and think, 'Oh! I'm looking at an effects shot!' What you're actually looking at is two effects shots in one. There's one shot that begins with the camera looking down at Coffey in his cell. He throws his head back, and these buglike things pour out of his mouth, flutter around like moths towards the ceiling and then fly out over the guards, who are standing out on 'The Mile.' The camera rises up from Coffey and moves through this little row of bars, which are above a cement sill that separates them from the cell's main bars. The shot then sails out over the heads of the guards, who react as the bugs dissipate and vanish.

We nailed a pretty great shot, except that our focus was bad on Coffey at the beginning, and the guards' performances were best in that take. In the other take, where Coffey was in focus, the guards weren't looking at the right spot in the air. The effects team helped us out by compositing the two different takes together, using the cell's cement sill like a traveling matte. In the end result, you see the shot of Coffey from the take where he was in focus, and as the camera moves out over the sill, we segue into the other take, and you absolutely do not notice it.

Do you give your actors much direction, or do you believe, like Alfred Hitchcock did, that casting is the key, and you can just let your actors go once you cast them?

Darabont: I don't know that I 'let them go,' necessarily. For me, directing actors is really about gradations of the tone, if you will. I think I'm fairly straightforward with my direction. Every once in a while, I'll get into some sort of vague territory where I'm trying to tweak their emotions by talking about something conceptual, but *usually* my directions are more along the lines of 'Can you do it quieter?' or 'Do it a little less happy' or 'Can you be a bit more pensive here?' It's that sort of

thing, and good actors will simply make the adjustment and go on. Sometimes I'm not right, of course. We might discover that 'pensive' is the wrong choice, but I'll usually see that immediately and then say, 'Remember what you did during the first take?' [Laughs.]

Can you tell us a bit about the film's 'wraparound' sequence? It has a different sort of feel and look than the rest of the film.

Darabont: It does, indeed. In fact, I used a different cinematographer for those sequences. We lost David Tattersall [due to his prior commitments], which was a drag, but there's a silver lining in every cloud. In this case, the benefit was that I got to do the work with Gabriel Beristain [BSC]. He's an amazing cinematographer, and he gave a different look and film feel to those scenes. David and I had always intended to lend those shots a different feel anyway, and Gabby and I managed to accomplish that without breaking a sweat.

How would you describe the look of those sequences?

Darabont: They're contemporary scenes, so the look is probably just a bit more high-key and 'current.' The stuff that David shot was all set in 1935, so it's got more of a lush, soft-lit look overall. It looks like the past, whereas the stuff Gabby shot is bit starker and not particularly 'romantic'-looking. The look of the modern scenes is a bit more straightforward.

Are you open to suggestions from the actors and crew?

Darabont: Oh, God yeah. I solicit opinions and input every step of the way, although I do tend to have a pretty clear idea of where I'm going with the work — *most* of the time, that is! You can't really know where you're heading all of the time. I love hearing what my fellow filmmakers have to say, because it means I'm not alone out there. I'd be really uncomfortable if I felt that the people I was working with were just chess pieces that I could move around on a board, without considering their input and their creative ideas. Ultimately, those ideas can only help the movie. I have no ego when it comes to saying, 'Oh! There's a good idea.' Sure, I'll steal it — I'm not proud! But I do reserve the right to make the final decision and break out in a certain direction, even though the proverbial rocks might be over there. I'll just call out, 'Right this way, boys! Follow me!'

All kidding aside, my colleagues on this film were very generous. You couldn't work with a better bunch of more committed, passionate people than I did on this picture. I don't know if I'll ever be so lucky again. ■



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Making Miracles

Visual effects lend ambience to *The Green Mile.*

by Ron Magid



Lightning may very well strike twice for director/writer Frank Darabont, who has now adapted his second Stephen King-penned prison drama, *The Green Mile*, after his celebrated first effort, *The Shawshank Redemption*. But while *Shawshank* offered a sense of realism, *The Green Mile* mixes its gritty story with a touch of fantasy provided by Matte World Digital Rhythm & Hues, Industrial Light + Magic and POP Studios.

Of course, the film's fantasy elements could easily have softened the story's edge, with detrimental results. As Darabont notes, "If the audience thinks, 'That's a wonderful special effect,' that's a danger. In fact, after an early test screening, I cut a couple of effects shots from the film. Although they were well-done, they threatened to take the audience out of the movie."

Green Mile visual effects supervisor Charles Gibson oversaw the film's 75 effects shots to ensure that they remained as naturalistic as possible, considering that the story revolves around John Coffey, a seven-foot-tall inmate with supernatural powers. "You have to understate [the effects]," Gibson says. "They are shocking and very unexpected when you see them, but we strove as often as possible to create effects that reflected the sometimes dark and brooding tone of the picture. What helped us was the originality of the effects as they were described; we looked for techniques that hadn't been seen before."

Creating the Gothic atmosphere of the prison itself fell to the maestros at Matte World Digital (*The*

Images courtesy of Matte World Digital.

Truman Show, The Insider). Gibson explains, "They did 'surgery' on existing shots to improve them in some way, like adding skies that needed to be extra-gorgeous and a lot of the weather, including a storm sequence. Because the story takes place mostly in the prison, we get outside rather infrequently, so Frank really wanted those broad vistas to be special."

Most of Matte World Digital's work involved establishing shots of the large, forbidding prison. "Frank wanted us to be bold with the imagery, and he asked us to make those shots reminiscent of Dracula's castle in a classic horror movie," says company founder Craig Barron.

One sequence required the addition of elements into moving plates such as dramatic storm clouds, interactive lightning and digital rain. Says artist Brett Northcutt, "It was necessary to add my matte-painting elements by using match-move techniques where the background was placed at infinity, so that it would not grow in size as much as the other elements closer to the camera. My favorite shot pushes in toward a barbed-wire fence to feature the prison illuminated by an impressive lightning storm. We incorporated the on-set lightning flashes and rain that were in the original plate by keeping them as a percentage exposure and then adding our digital rain and flashes to enhance what was already there. I wanted my digital lightning to have much more interaction with the night environment than the usual pasted-on, cutout look that just flashes on and off. I worked out an illuminated cloudy sky animation with interactive lighting coming from the lightning bolts themselves. The final effect, which shows lightning illuminating the front of the prison with backlit storm clouds above, was done a frame at a time."

Meanwhile, artist Chris Evans created some subtle digital matte shots that added deep-blue starry night skies and moonlit landscapes outside the prison for a night escape sequence. "Those night matte shots presented the challenge of revealing more of the landscape than the eye could actually see, while establishing the look of scenes lit artificially with HMI lighting," Evans says. "The images were subtly worked to lessen the contrast and brightness in some areas, which lent the scene a soft blue ambient fill with hints of warm rimlight from the full moon. I wanted to show the beauty of a moonlit world from which the prisoners were shut off. We even added CG fireflies in a field at night!"

At ILM, Ellen Poon supervised some 23 shots that primarily depict Coffey's healing powers, and the swarms of magical insects that spew from the gifted inmate's mouth. "Our effects can be divided into three categories: the bugs, glowing light in Coffey's hands, and a healing effect that manifests itself as light moving from Coffey's mouth to the mouth of the warden's wife, Melinda, who is dying of cancer," Poon relates. "Frank didn't want those shots to look like effects shots, but like fantastical events that are brought on by Coffey. He wanted the audience to have a sense of amazement and to empathize with the characters. These are very ethereal, somewhat technically challenging effects that had to visually convey that miracles are happening in those scenes."

Although Darabont wanted the animated swarm to have an organic quality, he didn't want the insects to read as "real" bugs. "We made the bugs graphic and small, and created a swarm of black buglike objects that turned into wisps of smoke and disappeared," Poon recalls. "We had some of them fly very close to the camera and made them go out of focus, since most of the indoor scenes had shallow depth of field. That approach gave the swarm depth and realism."

Despite the preternatural vein of such sequences, ILM's artists had to ensure that their effects blended not only with their live-action plate surroundings, but also with the overall tone of the film. "Those sound like two opposing ideas, so our task was to somehow find the middle ground and make the effects believable," Poon says. "Because these effects were not of this world, and therefore couldn't be defined in so many words, Frank would look at the shots and give us his comments and preferences, which were always constructive."

The "healing light" effects were substantially harder to create, since there was very little interactive light on set. For those scenes, ILM's artists



Two impressive effects shots from *The Green Mile*, created by the artists at Matte World Digital. Most of the company's work involved establishing shots of the large, forbidding Cold Mountain Penitentiary.

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Making Miracles

had to brighten the characters and the objects in the frame, as well as the air itself. "The healing effect looks like a sort of a liquid light flowing from Coffey's mouth into the mouth of the person he's curing," says ILM CG supervisor Carl Frederick. "Those were difficult effects because it's hard to illuminate the atmosphere — to add light that interacts with the environment and everything in the air. We generally work with objects, whereas lighting up a gas is more of a volumetric effect. We had to make a representation of the actual volume of the air in the room. We then ran a program that moved through that whole space and asked, 'How much light is being absorbed or reflected from this point? How much is being emitted?' The program just went through that whole volume, added it all up and got a final illumination value for the interior of that room."

Darabont insisted that the healing glow had to appear organic and constantly evolving. This dictum forced ILM's artists to brighten the characters and other objects in the scene during the compositing stage. "Adding light was difficult because we're talking about an artificial application of light to pre-existing elements, and we didn't really have those elements," Frederick explains. "Sometimes we could paint light into the scene and then 'grow' that brightness over time, but because it's essentially a 2-D effect, it's hard to get any dimensionality. It's fairly difficult to paint the effect of light over an arbitrarily-shaped surface and make it look [like] something that you can believe in. In order to light those objects, we therefore had to either replace them or create a three-dimensional representation of them and then light that. We then used that as a guide, or actually blended highlights from our 3-D representation right into the overall lighting."

Both Rhythm & Hues (*Babe, End of Days*) and the artists at POP (*What Dreams May Come, Three Kings*) had worked with Gibson before on *Mouse Hunt*, so he quite naturally hired them to help out with some effects in *Green Mile* that involved a mouse. POP handled several effects, including subtly enhancing shots of a live-action mouse. One of the most demanding involved digitally manipulating the mouse so that it appeared to roll across the floor on a spool. "So many things are changing in that shot," says POP digital effects supervisor Lawrence Littleton, "and it's all happening while the camera moves and racks focus."

Rhythm & Hues created a CG mouse when the real "stunt rodents" couldn't physically perform certain required actions, but those instances were surprisingly rare. "As it turned out, the mice was exceptionally well-trained, and we didn't have to do very much at all," Gibson says. "Most of our energy went into different kinds of effects."

POP contributed the film's final effect, a shot featuring a series of three dissolves depicting Tom Hanks's character aging from young to old. The shot also details his evolving relationship with the mouse. "It's a single shot of the character walking towards the camera in about 1,989 frames, and it's more than a minute and a half long," explains compositor Michael Degtjarewsky. "We shot the plates and matched the sets. It's a very beautiful, poignant piece of the film which reveals that the mouse lives as long as the old man does."

Perhaps the greatest difficulty *The Green Mile* presented to all concerned was maintaining that delicate balance between fantasy and reality. Sometimes just the *effect* of an effect, no matter the quality, can knock a film off that fine line. As Darabont notes, "Sometimes you realize, 'Hey, I really don't need that shot, do I?' You can sometimes leave things a bit more to the imagination if the effect is *not* there." ■

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A Hard-Knock Life



Director Alan Parker and cinematographer Michael Seresin, BSC bring the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Angela's Ashes* to the big screen.

by Eric Rudolph

Unit photography by
David Appleby and Bill Kaye

After living a quiet life in New York City as a public school English teacher for more than a quarter century, Frank McCourt wrote a harrowing account of his impoverished childhood in Limerick, Ireland during the '30s and '40s. That memoir, the chart-topping *Angela's Ashes*, thrust McCourt into the limelight and earned him a Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction.

Both terrifying and reassuring, *Angela's Ashes* tells a tale of life on the bitter edge of poverty and starvation in a tough, damp and gray land, and

Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.



Opposite page: Malachy and Angela McCourt and family trudge through the muck and mire of their Limerick neighborhood. Director Alan Parker (this page, bottom photo) strove for complete period authenticity, and these exterior sets were built under the guidance of production designer Geoffrey Kirkland at Ardmore Studios in Dublin, Ireland. The two men had previously collaborated on such films as *Bugsy Malone, Midnight Express, Mississippi Burning* and *Come See the Paradise.*

of McCourt's eventual escape to New York City. McCourt's father, Malachy, was considered a victim of prejudice because he was a Northerner married to a woman from South Ireland. According to the book, however, the elder McCourt (played in the film by Robert Carlyle) also never seemed to grasp the idea that providing for his rapidly expanding family was something worthy of his commitment. It fell to his wife, Angela (Emily Watson), to provide as well as she could for her four surviving boys. (According to the family's public records, three other children perished.)

As a result of Malachy McCourt's indifference, his family rarely had enough food, clothing or even adequate shelter, and the children were in nearly constant mortal danger. In the documentary *The McCourts of Limerick*, made by Frank McCourt's nephew, Conor McCourt, a Limerick doctor who treated two of the dying children, is reputed to have said that the children "died of ignorance. There was absolutely no reason for these children to have died."



A Hard-Knock Life



Seeking to create naturalistic illumination, director of photography Michael Seresin, BSC made the utmost use of motivated light from windows and practical lamps.

This gripping drama made *Angela's Ashes* prime material for a film, and veteran director Alan Parker teamed once again with cinematographer Michael Seresin, BSC to meet the challenge of photographing the tragic but ultimately triumphant tale. The longtime collaborators had previously worked together on the films *Bugsy Malone, Midnight Express, Fame, Birdy, Angel Heart* and *Come See the Paradise*, while the cameraman has since shot the pictures *City Hall* and *Mercury Rising*.

In determining their visual approach to the picture, the filmmakers referenced the book *Dorothea Lange's Ireland*, which features black-and-white images taken by the renowned still photographer while she was on assignment for *Life* magazine in 1954, as well as additional images made by Lange and other photographers working for America's depression-era Farm Service Administration. Parker and Seresin initially thought *Angela's Ashes* might work best in black-and-white, but also realized that a monochrome strategy would severely handicap the film's marketability.

Seeking a creative alternative to black-and-white, Seresin did extensive tests of various stocks and print processes. "I didn't want bright colors, and I found the new Kodak Vision stocks to be too glossy for the mood I wanted," he reveals. "Through my tests, I determined that shooting with some of Kodak's older production stocks, and making the release prints on Kodak's old print stock using Technicolor's ENR process (see "Soup du Jour," *AC* Nov. 1998), would yield a muted, dark, contrasty look."



The muting, shadow-deepening effect of ENR seemed perfectly suited to the downbeat material. The world of *Angela's Ashes* is defined by the family's tiny, dark dwellings, which are illuminated by scant rays of daylight during the daytime and feeble candles and lanterns at night. Outside, the damp sky hangs heavily, and the light is gray and depressing.

The film presents all of these conditions with riveting verisimilitude, but this realistic approach proved to be the cinematographer's greatest challenge. The quest for realism extended to the design of the studio sets depicting the McCourt's various dwellings, which were built to their realistic, minuscule dimensions at Ardmore Studios in Dublin, Ireland, where most of the filming took place. Upon stepping into the soundstage each morning, the filmmakers became physically immersed within the confining world in which the characters struggled to live their lives. "Our production designer, Geoffrey Kirkland, usually designs sets to be a bit larger than real life in order to give us room to work," explains Seresin, "but this time he was scrupulous and built all of the sets to their precise, tiny dimensions. We couldn't believe it when we got to the set and saw that the rooms were actually 6' by 9'. We complained, but he said, 'Well, that's how big they were; you make it work.'"

Shooting in such confined spaces proved to be a daunting chore. "We did a huge amount of work where we did not remove walls or the ceilings," Seresin explains. "Especially in the beginning, we shot within the confines of the four walls. We did remove walls for the more complex scenes, but we tried to avoid doing that as much as possible. The walls were all plastered together the way they would have been in reality, and it was a huge job to put them back."

When asked about his strict



Cinematography

Director of Photography
MICHAEL SERESIN

ANGELA'S ASHES

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A Hard-Knock Life



The almost relentlessly desperate plight of the McCourts had a strong effect on members of the production crew, particularly when they shot several sequences at the actual locations where certain events took place.

adherence to realistic dimensions, production designer Kirkland laughs with a hint of wicked glee, acknowledging that Seresin's account of his "take it or leave it" attitude is accurate. "We stuck pretty closely to the actual dimensions of the dwellings," Kirkland confirms. "You can't fake it when people have nothing. In homes such as these, with their few sticks of used furniture, it would look wrong if there was too much room. The performers might move differently and take on the wrong physical attitude. Getting the size of these places right seemed very important to the story."

That said, Kirkland concedes that his crew did cheat the size of the rooms "a tiny bit here and there, and we made sure we could move walls when needed. However, we moved as few walls as possible [because of the difficulty of replacing the plaster finish]. Even if it is a simple wall that takes 20 minutes to move, you don't want to do it too often. At most, we'd move a wall two or three times a day."

According to Seresin, though, the hardship of working in these tight confines actually fueled the creative process. "There is a discipline that comes from those sorts of restrictions that makes one more inventive," he opines. "You have to make it work 12 to 14 hours each day for 75 days, so you are really on your toes the whole time."

Long-time A-camera operator Mike Roberts notes that while it will always be satisfying to conquer difficult logistics, the making of *Angela's Ashes* was sometimes a very uncomfortable experience, particularly when the filmmakers were at real locations: "It was crowded in the tiny interiors of our real locations, but worse than that was the smell of who knows what that has stuck to the walls over the years. We were also filming in wet, muddy streets a good bit, which was a big nuisance. I occasionally found myself thinking that I'd have liked to have been back on my previous film, *Notting Hill*, where we shot at the Ritz Hotel and other posh London locations."



In keeping with the downbeat and tragic nature of the story, the atmosphere on the set was subdued. "The crew's mood was definitely darker on this film," Roberts says. "The story affects your mood; if you're working on a comedy, you feel a bit happier. The depressing nature of this story tended to get people down. We were working 12- to 16-hour days, six days a week, on a film about people shivering, starving and dying. Understandably, things got fairly grim at times."

The production's efficiency was aided by the use of two cameras for a great deal of the filming. Seresin was reluctant to work in that mode, but knew there were good reasons for doing so. "On my last picture, *City Hall*, we used two cameras simply

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We would like to thank the following people:

Executive Producer: Adam Schroeder
Producer: Scott Rudin
Director/Producer: Alan Parker
Co. Producer: David Wimbury
Production Supervisor: Gerry Toomey
Director of Photography: Michael Seresin
Camera Operator: Mike Roberts
Chief Lighting Technician: Peter Bloor



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A Hard-Knock Life



The dank and dingy interiors of the McCourts' hovel were constructed in period-accurate dimensions — leaving precious little room for Seresin and his crew to work. Production designer Geoffrey Kirkland notes, "You can't fake it when people have nothing. In homes such as these, with their few sticks of used furniture, it would look wrong if there was too much room."

because Al Pacino's performances vary from take to take; if you've got one brilliant take in a medium shot, you've also got the close-up. That approach is limiting in terms of lighting, though: you can't put the cameras on top of each other, so which one do you light for? On *Angela's Ashes,* which has some scenes that involve eight people in a small room, [using two cameras] enabled us to shoot more quickly, which was important. That strategy wound up working pretty well, and in fact, it made my job easier."

Two Moviecam Compact cameras were utilized, with Ted Adcock serving as the B-camera operator. "I needed small cameras because of the tight spaces," Seresin explains.

Seresin's working methods combine the English and American styles. He says that A-camera operator Roberts, who has worked with Parker on nearly all of the director's films, "has impeccable taste in camera movements and should be more involved in the process. Mike operates a camera 45 weeks a year, and I am quite happy to draw on that experience. In the States, the cinematographer controls everything, with the operator sitting on a box until the take. There is certainly no harm in having a second pair of eyes, someone who may be thinking things over while you're busy lighting. A good operator like Mike can come up with imperceptible little tracking moves that can help a shot tremendously."



However, that doesn't mean that Seresin relegates himself to the role of the traditional British lighting cameraman. "I'm not interested in simply being a lighting technician," he confesses. "I think of myself as falling somewhere between the American and British approaches."

The daunting task of filming a sad story in crowded spaces and in foul, damp weather was somewhat ameliorated by the close relationship Seresin has developed with his longtime gaffer, Peter Bloor. "Peter and I have worked together for 20 years, so what we're talking about on the set is finessing; the nuts and bolts are taken for granted," Seresin notes with pleasure.

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The youthful Frank McCourt (Joe Breen) broods about his dead-end existence. The picture was largely cast with nonprofessional child actors, and Seresin credits camera operator Mike Roberts for being able to compensate for the tyro thespians' unpredictable actions.

Seresin's overall lighting approach was to "keep the lighting as natural as possible. I generally use large, diffused single sources, but my main goal is to re-create the natural light source, no matter what it is." Because the filmmakers were planning to treat at least the show prints with the contrast-increasing and shadow-enhancing ENR process, the film was also lit with a bit less contrast than usual.

In the interest of authenticity, the day interiors were lit mainly with window light, while night interiors were illuminated with simulations of candle and lantern light. This resulted in a lighting scheme built around narrow shafts of daylight and deep shadows for the day interiors, and tiny bits of warm light surrounded by more shadows for night interiors.

The day interior lighting scheme — in which shafts of daylight fall more or less where they naturally would — underscores the poverty and chaos of the McCourts' existence. The light plays randomly on the dirty faces of the perennially hungry McCourt children, creating unsettling patterns of chiaroscuro. Seresin resisted the temptation to beautify the lighting of the film's hard story. "The temptation is always to round the light off and make it look like a canvas by Rembrandt or Vermeer," he says. "In my opinion, that approach would have looked too cosmetic, and it wouldn't have worked for this picture. I think we had a fair degree of success in resisting the beautification of the light."

The cinemtographer maintains that he and Parker did not set out to use the lighting to make a symbolic point, but simply felt that a realistic style would be most effective for the story. Seresin remarks, "Alan and I never talked about using the lighting to underscore the poverty, but I suppose our approach accomplished that anyway. The cross- and side-lighting from the windows gave the actors a hollow-cheeked look, which helped to convey a sense of the malnutrition that was the predominate factor in the characters' misery."

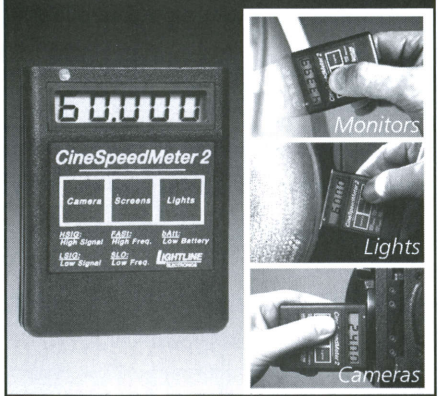
The haphazard, chaotic light patterns also served to inspire the project's nonprofessional child actors, who portray the McCourt children at various ages. "We tried to make it as real for the children as possible," the cinematographer explains. "These were not Hollywood kids; they were real Irish children who gave good performances, but they were not professional about hitting marks and such. We tried not to coach them or rein in their movements too much. That hands-off tactic gave us even more reason to avoid putting a lot of lights in the rooms, or taking off the ceilings to aim light into the sets from above. Avoiding those methods allowed the children to stay in the moment more easily."

Despite the somewhat uncontrollable nature of the young actors' movements, the filmmakers eschewed the erratic, documentary-style camera movement that sometimes appears in films where scenes are improvised. Seresin credits operator Roberts, who has worked with Parker on a number of films involving children, for helping to keep the picture's compositions under control. "You get used to working with children," Roberts says. "It seems best not to rehearse too much, because they'll often get it right on the first take. If kids have to go through too many takes, they tend to get bored, and it will show onscreen."

Seresin had another reason for keeping his number of lamps to a minimum on day interiors. "I was sure that using too much light for the interiors would work against the truthfulness of the film," he notes. "I tried to make the window light work with as few instruments inside as possible. Even on a bright day, such

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A Hard-Knock Life

small windows would have allowed in very little light."

Because the cameraman opted for such low light levels, he used Kodak's 500 ASA EXR 5298 stock for most interiors. Even with the fast stock, his Cooke S4 T2 primes were kept nearly wide open for most interiors. The main interior light source was usually a 10K tungsten lamp positioned outside the set's window. "Because I was relying primarily on the light coming in through the window, we often didn't see the walls of the rooms at all," Seresin comments. "Alan would sometimes complain, 'We can't see anything back there!' I'd respond, 'We don't need to.' When the actors are close to a wall or door, you see it. You see enough of their dreadful surroundings at first, so my feeling was that we've made the point about how awful their homes were — let's let the characters' faces tell us the rest."

Production designer Kirkland didn't mind that the sets he designed were often enveloped in deep shadows. "There are two sides to that question," he notes. "Both the actors' faces and the sets are important and integral to the story. On their faces, you see their pain; on the walls, you see their poverty. However, in modern filmmaking, I feel that we see too much. It's better *not* to see so much; it is an important element of our perception, and part of the magic of the movies. What the eye doesn't see, the mind fills in; darkness is the scariest thing on a movie screen. It comes down to the fact that storytelling is about credibility, not accuracy."

The ENR processing handled by Technicolor London deepened the shadows created by the shafts of window light, and Seresin was thrilled with the results. "The ENR process gave us beautiful deep blacks and desaturated colors." he enthuses. "The ENR took the colors back a bit and deepened the shadows. That look was appropriate given the makeup's effect on the actors, whose skin tones were given a pretty frightening pallor, as well as the drab costumes and wall colors."

For night interiors, the filmmakers occasionally strayed a bit from realism for the sake of cinematic effect. "The actual lights the family would have had — candles and lanterns — produced puny, hard spots of light," Seresin notes. "When we put the glass chimneys over our lanterns, they would give off a light that was too pretty. We tried spraying the chimneys down, but the lanterns still gave off a glow that was too 'nice.' Instead, we avoided showing the lights onscreen, and we re-created the light that the candles and lanterns would have produced out of frame."

The re-creation of these light sources was kept simple. "We used small, diffused sources, from 250W to 650W instruments, with ⅛ or ¼ straw or CTO gels for warmth," Seresin explains. "The gels were placed either on the light or on a diffusion frame. We also occasionally bounced the small lights and then directed the light through diffusion and gels."

Lighting was less of an issue with exteriors. The weather cooperated frequently, offering gray, cloudy skies on a regular basis. "The general notion of Ireland is of a soft, green, beautiful place," Seresin points out. "But the reality for these characters was the exact antithesis. The reason Ireland is thought of as soft and green is because it rains *all the time.* On the few days when there is a shaft of sun through the clouds, the landscape is green and beautiful — like the Ireland shown in the tourist brochures — because there's been near-constant rain."

While the film's day exteriors have the cool bluish look of uncorrected tungsten film, corrective filtration was in fact used. "We were filming in late fall and early winter, and at that time of year the light is quite cool," the cinematographer



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Making news

Arrow 50

making news

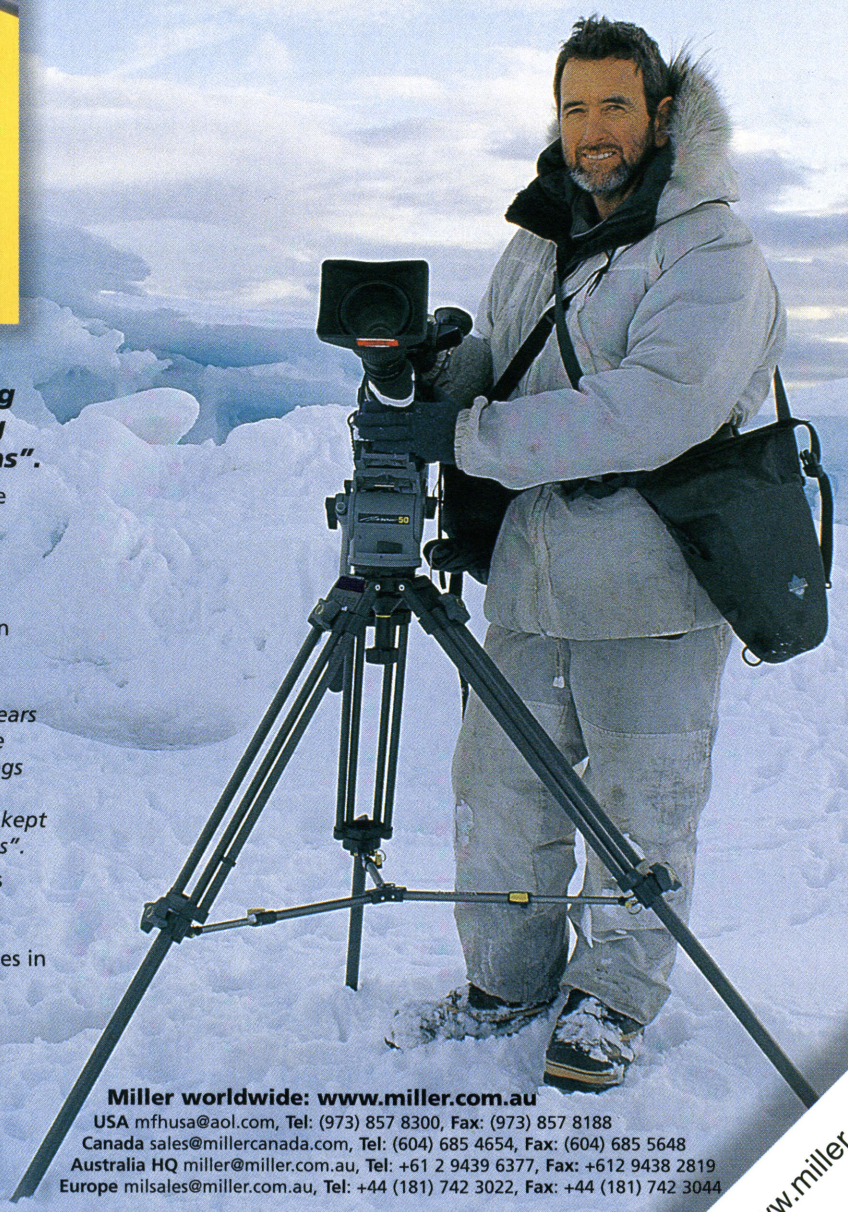


"The Arrow 50 retained the subtlety of control on the drag settings and kept functioning smoothly in the worst conditions".

Cinematographer Rory McGuinness made news recently when he was stranded for six weeks on an island in the remote Siberian arctic. While awaiting rescuers, Rory kept shooting the polar bear documentary in conditions that made incredible demands on crew and equipment.

"We had minus 25 to 30 Celsius, plus windchill, but while we had filmstock and bears we just kept shooting. It soon sorted out the gear. Some of it froze solid, while other things just kept going. The Arrow 50 retained the subtlety of control on the drag settings and kept functioning smoothly in the worst conditions".

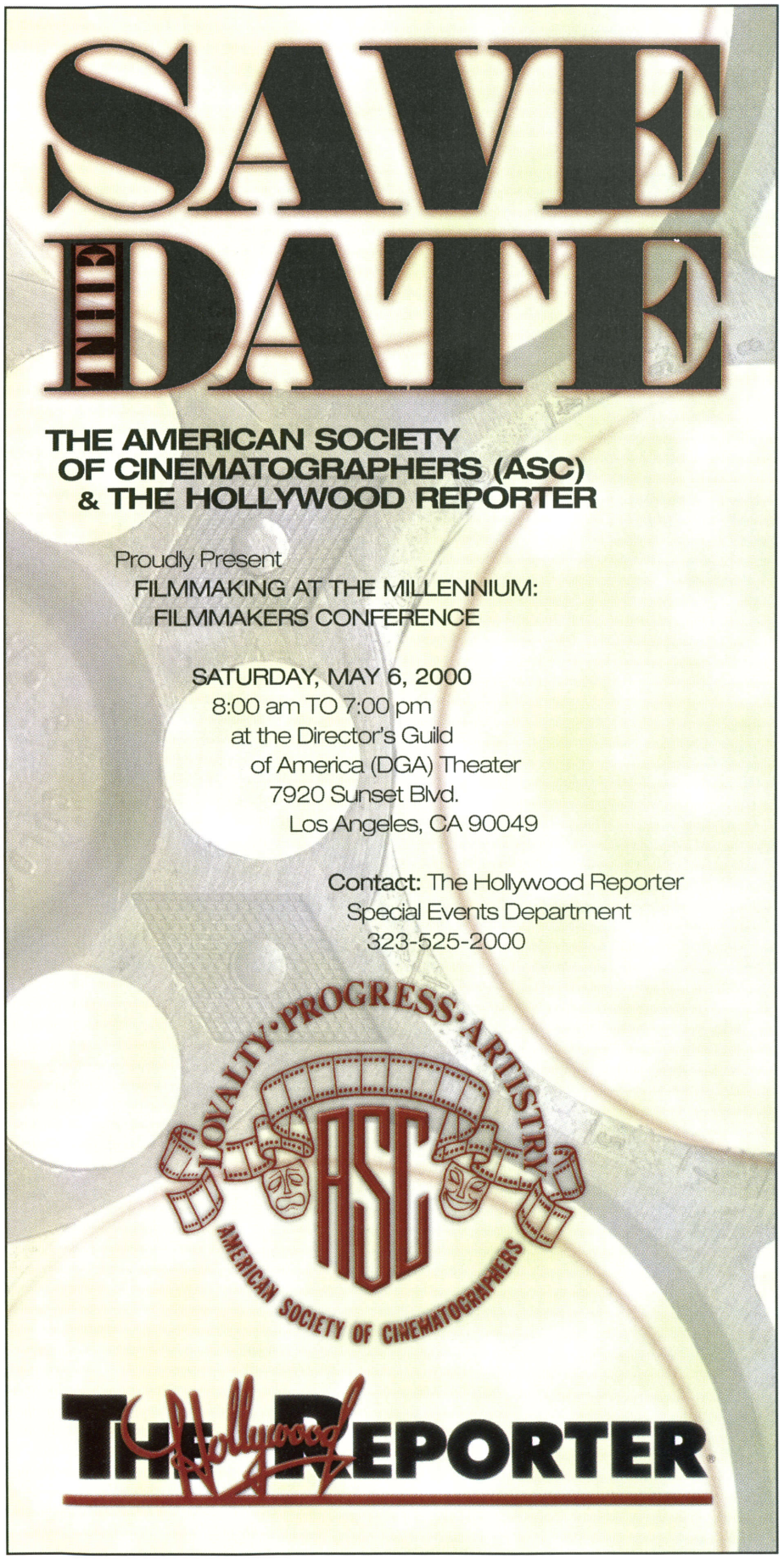
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A Hard-Knock Life

says. "The cloud cover is already beginning to move in by then. You have to remember that Ireland is a little island surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean!"

For the Irish urbanites of the McCourts' era, gray was undoubtedly a much more predominant color than green. Seresin explains that "in the cities there is a gray, damp feeling, with constant moisture in the air. It is unrelentingly cold, damp and miserable. That is what most of our exterior one-light dailies looked like, so we simply maintained that cool, damp feeling in the final timing."

Images that included the sky were rarely sought by the filmmakers. As Seresin points out, "The reality was that the sky was not a big part of these people's lives. They lived in poky little houses with little rooms, and outside there were narrow streets or alleyways. The sky mostly offered a dark, oppressive feeling; it was like there were always rain clouds six feet above the roof. We also didn't include a lot of skies because they didn't add anything to the frame; they were always monotonous gray, and once we established that feel — as we'd done with the dinginess of the film's interiors — there was no need to revisit it."

Scenes involving the young Frank McCourt's daytime walks in the moors with his habitually unemployed father offered little escape from the hard reality of the setting. "Those scenes opened up the story a bit, but you couldn't get away from the oppressive feeling," Seresin says. "There was still the dank, low sky, but instead of buildings, the characters were surrounded by a bit of heather. When we filmed those scenes, there was thick fog and you couldn't see very far. Alan joked that we could have filmed anywhere because visibility was so low."

Night exteriors were bathed in blue light, which Seresin chose because it suggested the cold and

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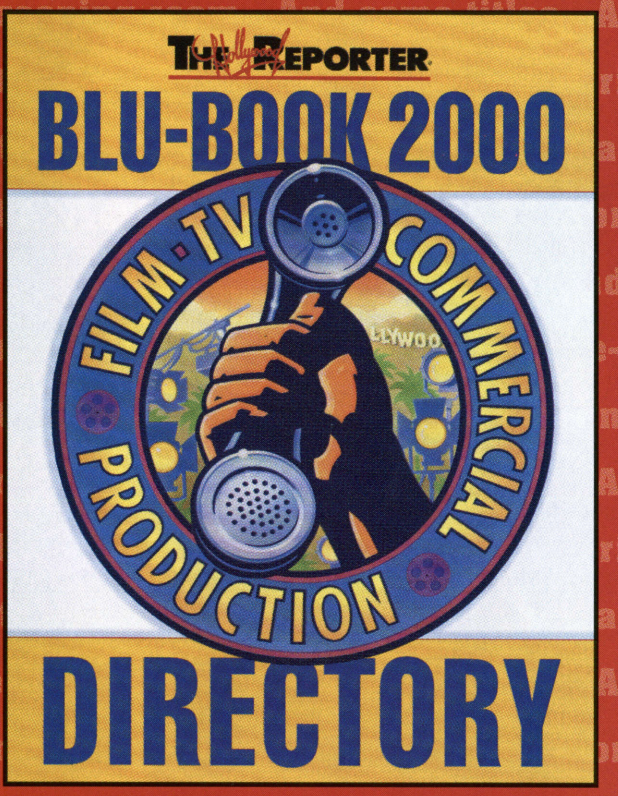
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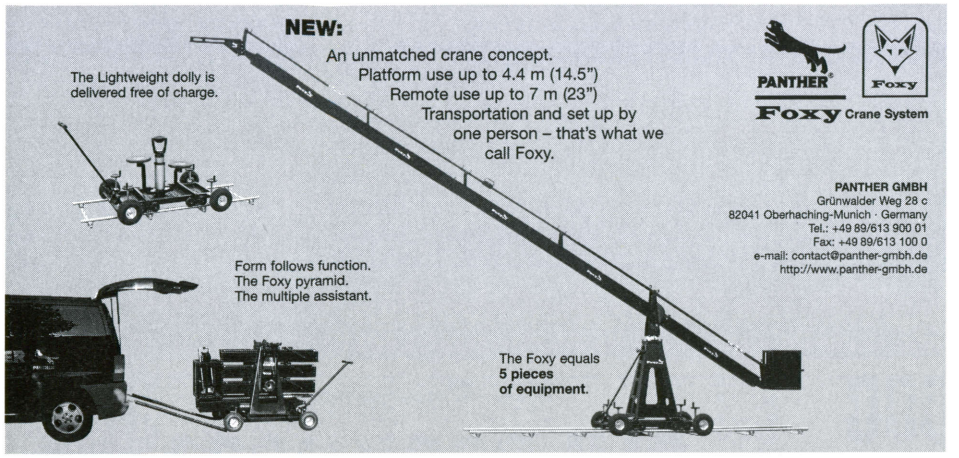
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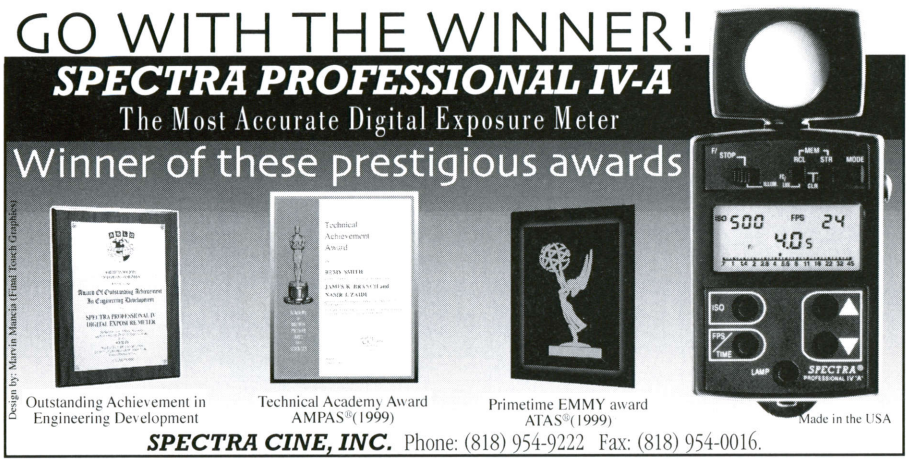
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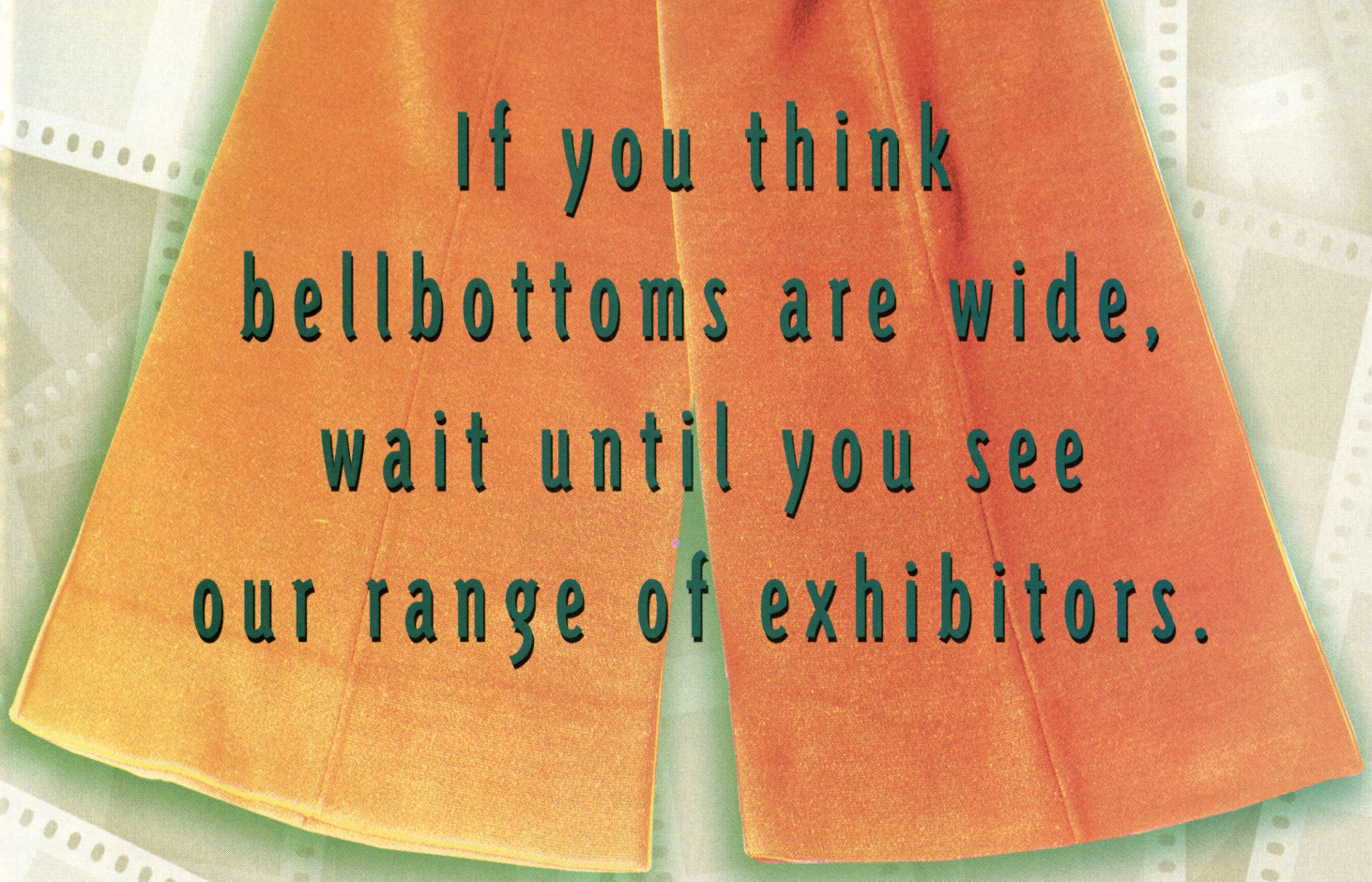
A Hard-Knock Life

dampness of the nights, and also because it felt appropriately unromantic. "The blue just seemed right," he says. "It emphasized the feeling of the cold and humidity, and evoked the generally hard, unfriendly nature of the place."

The coldness of the exterior light set up a contrast with the warm interior illumination, something Seresin normally tries to avoid. "I generally don't like to have a big contrast between moonlight and interior light," he explains. "Normally I would have gotten the feel of the two colors closer together. When [actor] Robert Carlyle is standing in the doorway at night, smoking as the children play in the lane, I remember thinking that the contrast of the warm and cool light just didn't look right. The gaffer, Peter Bloor, who'd had experience lighting for the ENR process on Alan's film version of *Evita* [shot by Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC; see *AC* Jan. '97], reminded me that the ENR would tamp down the colors. Despite that assurance, we still adjusted the lights so we wouldn't have the two contrasting colors mixing on the actors' faces. The blue stayed on the buildings and the lane and the back of Robert Carlyle's hair. We kept it off his face, which was lit by the warm light from inside the dwelling."

Night exteriors were lit with Wendy or Dino lights gelled with ¾ CTB. "We used the Wendys and Dinos because we don't have Musco lights in Europe," Seresin notes. "It was quite tough to fit the cranes into the narrow stone streets where we built the exterior sets."

When the maturing Frank McCourt finally sets out for America, he walks down a cobblestone lane that just happens to be reflecting a glowing light back at him, as if he's on a promising road to a better world. According to Seresin, however, the allegorical image wasn't created intentionally. "We never said, 'Let's make this a shining path that's



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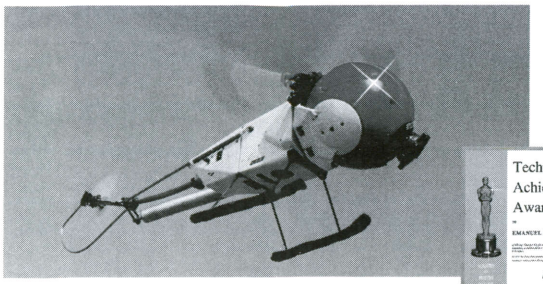
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A Hard-Knock Life

indicative of what's ahead,'" he maintains. "The street was wet from actual rain. It was overcast, but the clouds were moving fast. On one take, the sun came out for 20 seconds, still diffused, and hit the street and lit it up. That's the take that was used. We then mimicked that very soft, naturally diffused sunlight to keep the lighting consistent.

"The backlight from this bit of sun felt so right for the scene that we used it from both angles, when he was walking away from the camera and when he was walking toward us. Having a character backlit in a day exterior from two opposite directions is obviously not realistic, but we felt it was right for the scene, so we did it. Most likely, the only people who'll notice that will be a couple of cinematographers and directors!"

After all the hard work, the veteran cinematographer says he is pleased with the results of *Angela's Ashes,* and feels that the picture is illustrates the wide array of expressive tools now available to filmmakers. He was especially impressed with the look produced by his first use of the ENR process. "I'd tested ENR extensively in the past, but never used it," he reflects. "Using ENR for this film really was exciting, though. During timing, I had an ENR print and a regularly processed print running simultaneously. We would switch back and forth, and the difference was phenomenal and truly quantifiable. The ENR made it all feel more real, and lent a more tangible sense of the poverty — a third dimension, if you will.

"I give a lot of credit to Technicolor London, which to me is a true craftsman's lab. I've shot films for a long time, and it is rare for me to see something that I can get worked up about, especially nine months after completing principal photography. I felt that the results of the ENR process on *Angela's Ashes* were truly surprising and exciting." ■

Short Takes

Mazda's New Look

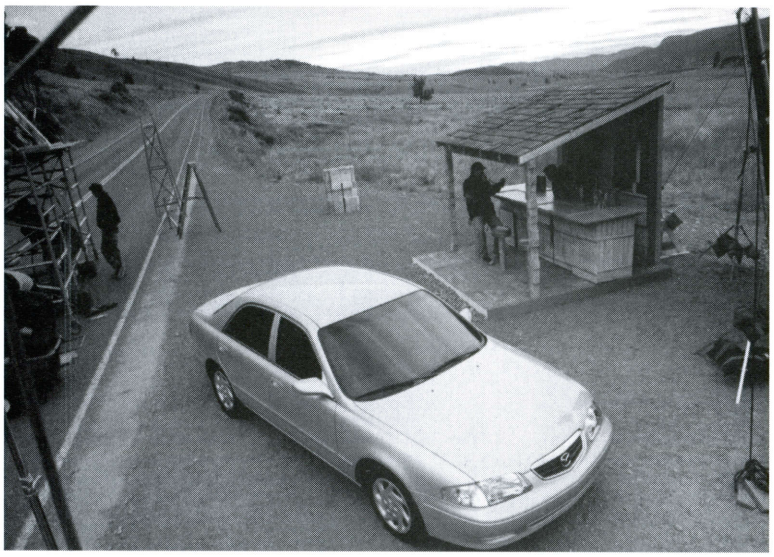
A Drive Around the Block(s)
by Jean Oppenheimer

Two years ago, Mazda created an eye-catching series of avant-garde TV commercials set in a "block world" environment, in which the surrounding landscape/cityscape was crafted of wooden cubes and geometric shapes, with only the featured car and people rendered as "normal" elements. This abstract, cubist environment was the brainchild of Rhythm & Hues director Charlie Watson, who based the idea on an antique collection of painted wooden blocks his mother used to have. However, the effect that many viewers, including industry professionals, assumed was created via CGI was actually done by combining old-fashioned miniatures with full-size live action. For the auto maker's latest two spots, Mazda and the ad agency decided to slightly alter this concept — retaining the "block-world" feel, but making it less surreal.

The first ad features a fashionably attired man and woman standing outside a roadside diner along a deserted stretch of Route 66. The couple hops into their Mazda sedan and drives off down the road as huge concrete sculptures of Cadillacs topple down like dominos beside them.

In the second spot, a driver cruises down a winding mountain road at night. He stops the car and hits the high beams. The moon turns into a mirrored disco ball and the car drives off.

Director of photography Marc Reshovsky (whose feature credits include *Red Rock West* and *Set It Off,* and who earned an ASC Award in 1997 for a special episode of the TV series *3rd Rock From the Sun*) was hired to shoot the live-action portions of both spots, while Watson's longtime special effects cinematographer, Chuck Schuman (whose credits include work on *Indian in the Cupboard, The Ghost and the Darkness* and *Wild, Wild West*), handled the miniature work.



Live-action portions of the Mazda commercial shoot were handled by cameraman Marc Reshovsky, who carefully photographed partial sets that would later be combined with miniatures shot by Chuck Schuman.

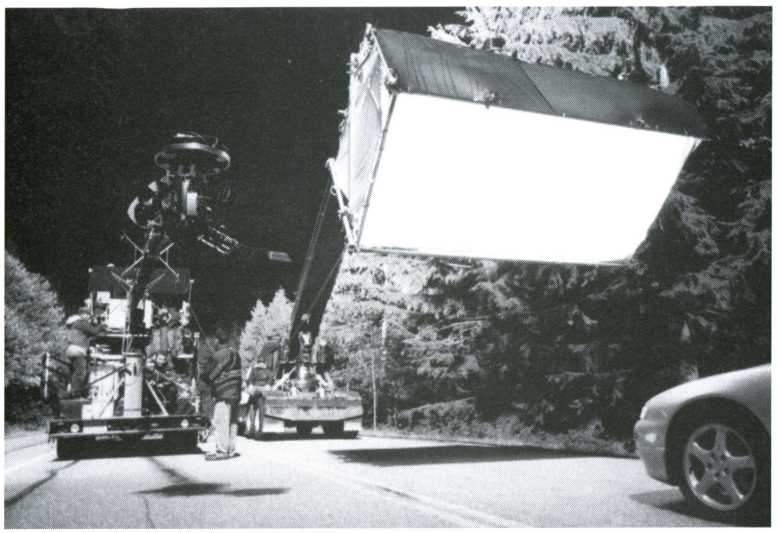
Photos courtesy of Marc Reshovsky

Reshovsky suggested shooting the first spot on Fuji's 8540 Velvia, a daylight-balanced 50 ASA reversal stock generally used for still photography but recently introduced by Fuji for motion picture work. "Velvia has an ultra-saturated and contrasty look, which is what we wanted," Reshovsky explains. "It is unique among reversal stocks in that it loves exposure. When you give it extra exposure, the colors become even more bold. It's a very slow film, but it's much better if you rate it even lower — at 40 or 32 ASA — and give it that extra ⅓- or ⅔-stop exposure. That gives it more range in the telecine and makes the colors even more vivid."

Reshovsky utilized both a Panastar and a Panavised Arri 435 for his portion of the shoot. He favors Primo primes and zooms, and also used a Frazier lens for a couple of low-angle shots — one of which called for the actors to step off a diner's porch and over the camera.

The live-action part of the shoot required a set consisting of a gravel turnout, a foreground sign, and a 15' x 10' diner front, complete with a porch, counter and stools — all of which production designer Bradley Thordarson built in the block-world style. "It was as if he deconstructed the building and chairs and signs into a series of small cubes which were then all put back together again," Reshovsky marvels. "To build the entire set out on location would have been very expensive and difficult to do because of the abstract nature of it, so Bradley built the smallest possible set to contain the action. A miniature, shot later, would extend the building to its full size, and contain the background sky and landscape. The two were combined by very carefully matching camera angles, lighting direction and lens choices."

Schuman accompanied the crew on the main live-action shoot, taking a



A large softbox containing Unilux strobe lights was used to illuminate the Mazda sedan for the second spot. Synched with the camera shutter while shooting at 12 fps, the strobes gave the illusion of a constant lighting source and kept the car in crisp focus while the background blurred.

The field of view becomes narrower when you focus closer, so to get the same field of view for close-up photography, you have to use a wider lens."

The Frazier system couldn't be used because the lens couldn't get low enough to the floor of the model. Schuman did a series of tests comparing the fields of view of various lenses and developed a graph that showed, on a comparison line, which millimeter lens focused at close range was equivalent to another lens at distant focus. He ended up using Primo primes on this spot, but notes that a Revolution lens employed on previous Mazda spots helped to get the lens axis to within one inch of his

series of careful readings and measurements of distances, lens perspective, lighting direction and so on, which would allow him to later re-create the scene on the miniature stage.

Overcast conditions on the first day of the shoot forced the crew to haul out every light they had in an effort to replicate bright sunlight. "We were so desperate in trying to duplicate sunlight over a fairly wide area that we did it in zones," Reshovsky recalls with a laugh. "We were on a locked-off shot, so we first lit the foreground area as hot as we could and shot it before moving on to the middle area and then the background. We figured that since we were locked-off and that compositing was going to be done anyway, the three zones could be stitched together in post. It was still a slow and painful process, though."

The sun briefly broke through on the second day, and the sequence was reshot, this time with Reshovsky using his lights for fill "because we knew we were going to crank the contrast so strongly in post." Three 18Ks were placed on a lift and a couple of 6K Pars were skipped off a silver lamé frame set on the ground in order to bring light into the actors' eyes.

"It's tricky to work with such a low ASA while using a Frazier lens and shooting at a variety of different speeds — 20, 60 or 120 fps," the cameraman notes. "At 120 fps with a T11 at 32 ASA, we were dealing with a very high level of



light, and the eye can be easily fooled because it looks so bright. I usually light by eye and then take a meter reading just to verify the stop, but this was one of the few situations where I tended to rely on a meter more than my eye."

For his section of the shoot, Schuman used a Fries-converted Mitchell camera, which he praises for its versatility. Not only can the camera be readily used with motion-control equipment and driven by computers, but it is made to run in reverse, which proved essential on this particular job. "We were shooting the miniatures in a 1/12 scale, so one inch equals one foot," explains Schuman. "In effect, you're doing macro-photography, because everything is within inches of the lens. subjects.

A decision had to be made whether to use blue- or greenscreen for shots needing composite work. "The Velvia has a very fine grain, and the low speed meant I would need extended exposures to get the proper depth of field on the model," notes Schuman. "That brought up the issue of reciprocity failure, and how any resulting color shift would affect the blue- or greenscreen shots."

Schuman shot exposure wedges, and because the daylight-balanced Velvia is very sensitive to over- and underexposure, he did them in 1/4-stop increments, using an 80A filter (allowing him to use tungsten lights with the daylight stock) while shooting with

greenscreen backings. "Coupled with the fact that Marc and Charlie had already overexposed by two-thirds of a stop, that meant the original effective ASA was brought down from 50 to 32," the cameraman observes. "Then I had to compensate for the 80A filter, which takes it down another 1⅔. That pushed us into very long exposures of four seconds or so, which meant that I had to add a CC10M [a color-compensation 10 magenta] filter in order to counteract the green shift that occurs with reciprocity failure in reversal stocks. The magenta filter took us down another third of a stop, leaving me with an effective ASA of 8. I needed a T11 to hold the depth of field on the miniature from about 14" to 24' [the length of the entire model], and that required four-second exposures if we wanted to keep the lighting levels manageable."

Because there are observable color-temperature shifts between the sun — the key light — and sky fill while shooting outdoors in daylight conditions, Schuman took careful notes on temperature readings during the live-section shoot. He reproduced that balance on his miniature stage using tungsten units, using the MIRED system to properly attune them.

Schuman opted for tungsten lamps rather than HMIs because of the long exposures required. "HMIs aren't stable enough for long exposures," he cautions. "The color temperature and brightness will change in subtle ways that you can't see, but when you are doing what is effectively time-lapse photography, and then speed it way up to 24 fps, you'll see the variations."

Another consideration was the smoke needed to create atmospheric perspective and depth on the miniature stage. To make the model look as if it was really outdoors and at a great distance, Schuman wanted a light haze in the air to represent the buildup of haze in a normal sky. "The smoke may not have any apparent movement to the eye, but when you play it back at 24 fps, you will see clouds jumping and moving through," he explains. "The technique to counteract that effect is to break up the exposure into at least three [in-camera] passes. That meant running the camera forward; then double-exposing by running the camera on the same shot backwards; and then triple-exposing by running it forward again. Between the passes, we needed to reverse the motor and reverse the take-up belt, and keep the smoke at a constant, measured density." He notes that this requirement made the Mitchell the perfect camera for the job.

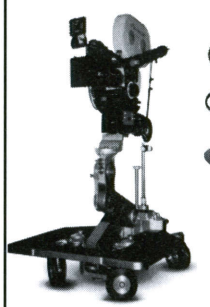
Schuman built up his required level of exposure over the course of the three separate passes, filming each one in 1.3-second-exposure increments. "Three times 1⅓ equals four," he points out. "That gave me a total [exposure] build-up of four seconds per frame, and doing it in three passes smoothed out the movement of the smoke."

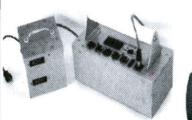
Watson ended up filming two separate endings for the spot. "I have always wanted to show that the world is actually a model and not CGI," the director remarks, "so in the last shot we dollied back from this environment the actors are in. When the shot reveals all of these flags, models and monitors under the table, as well as the production designer's dog sitting on the edge of the table, you realize it's a model." The alternate ending was a traditional one in which the car's occupants gaze at one another while the car speeds down the highway. The agency will decide which ending will be used.

The second Mazda spot, featuring a moonlight drive down a winding mountain road, offered a different set of challenges. One was that the dense woods were supposed to be composed of "block world" trees. Reshovsky had to find a way to keep the car sharp while abstracting — i.e. blurring — the background so viewers wouldn't realize they were seeing real-world evergreens. "We were shooting on a stretch of road on Mt. Seymour, outside Vancouver — it was quite an operation," Reshovsky recalls with a laugh. A Musco parked at the top of the hill provided overall illumination, while two 18Ks sat on a 100'-high platform at the bottom of the road, throwing fill light and bringing up the

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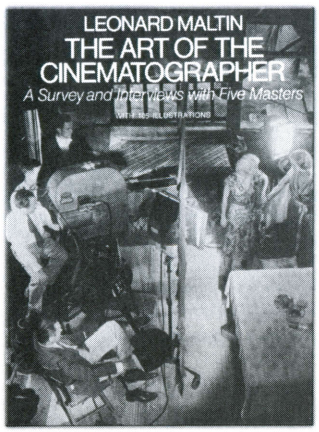
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trees on the downhill side.

Reshovsky again used a Panastar and Primo primes, as well as a Primo 4:1 zoom. He opted to use Kodak Vision 500T 5279 because of its speed. He wanted a contrasty look with a fairly fine grain, and knew that the areas he had to cover were quite large.

Stretched out along the road, hidden in the trees, were a series of 4K and 6K Pars, backlighting the trees. "Charlie also wanted pops of light [emanating from the forest]," Reshovsky relates. "To do that, we placed about 12 Lightning Strikes and another 8 or 10 Dataflash units — flash units that are manually operated from a control board — in front of the trees, and we timed them to flash and illuminate bits of the forest as the car went by. We also laid in a lot of smoke.

In the resulting footage, "you'd see dark and dim silhouettes of trees, and then there would be these pops of light illuminating the forest. But you'd never get a chance to fasten on them and realize that you were seeing a normal forest and not the block world."

Achieving the combination of a blurred background and a sharply focused car required some ingenuity on Reshovsky's part, as well as an almost comical parade of vehicles: the Mazda driving down the hill; the camera car with the Panastar on a Libra head; a flatbed truck carrying the smoke generator; and what Reshovsky calls "the *piece de resistance*": a Titan crane with a 6' x 12' softbox hanging from it.

The softbox held a dozen Unilux Strobes, which were wired to the Panastar and a strobe controller to maintain synch while shooting at 12 fps, allowing the Mazda to remain crisply lit in the frame. "We had discussed rotoscoping the car and creating the blurred background in post, as I had done on another shoot, but our postproduction schedule was far too short for that option," says Reshovsky. "The only other way I could think of doing it was to light the car with strobes synched to the camera's shutter. To the camera, it looks like a constant light."

Because the trees and surrounding road were *not* lit by the strobe softbox (but by the Musco and the Pars in the trees), the background appears to be slightly smeared by the motion at 12 fps, which is exactly what the filmmakers wanted. "I was just surprised we didn't snap the wire between the Titan and the camera car," Reshovsky admits with a shake of his head.

This was Reshovsky first use of a Libra head, and he was very happy with the results. "It has a stabilizing element to it that took out the bumps," he notes. "We were doing some abrupt camera moves on a camera crane arm at 12 fps, and I think that if we were shooting with another head we'd have had a lot of bounciness, which would have made those shots unusable. The Libra smoothed things out a lot and helped us get the shot."

As the spot continues, the Mazda comes to a stop and the driver gazes at the full moon in the distance. He flashes his headlights, and the moon turns into a disco ball. To achieve the effect, the camera was locked off and a 20' x 30' muslin was suspended over the automobile so that lights could be bounced up into it, creating a soft light on the car's top. A couple of 18Ks up in a lift provided edge-lighting, while a few Dataflashes and Lightning Strikes units were set up in the woods in order to create reflections of the forest on the car.

The moon itself would be created via CGI, but to shoot the scene, a real mirrored ball was hung about 30' in the air on a Condor, with a 4K Xenon beamed directly into it for the appropriate discotheque effect. "The disco ball was initially going to be put in as a computer-generated element," Reshovsky observes. "However, in order to get the lighting effect of the ball on the real car and driver, we had to do it live. That way, we got all of the little patches of light traveling across the road and the car." ■

New Products & Services

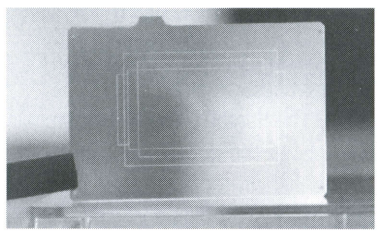
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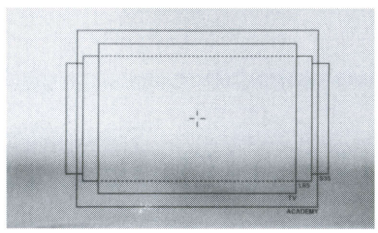
From Still Camera to Director's Viewfinder

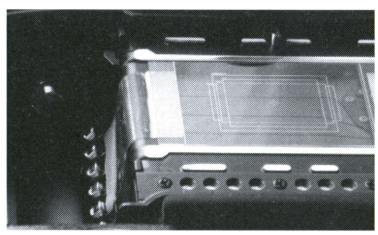
New York-based cinematographer Fortunato Procopio has developed the Fortune's Finder, a conversion kit that transforms a regular 35mm SLR still camera into a director's viewfinder that imprints Academy, 1.33:1, 1.85:1 and Super 35 framelines onto each photo.

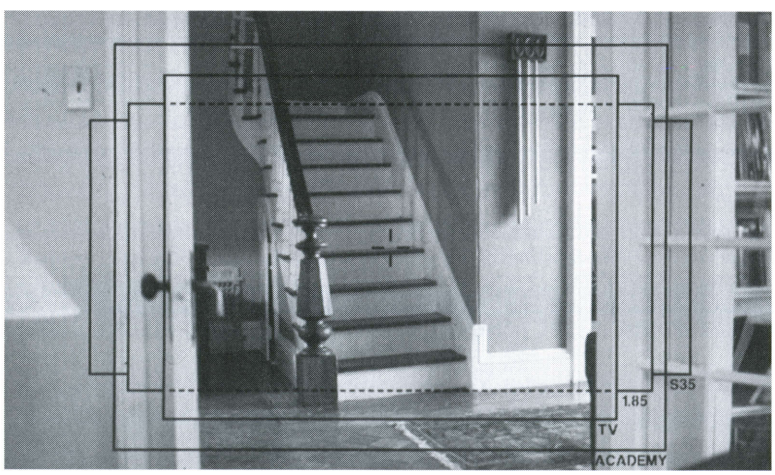
With this patent-pending system, photographic storyboards can be made (using an SLR and its prime and zoom lenses) that represent what a motion picture camera will see. "Many directors and cinematographers like to use their still cameras during preproduction, but everyone is always fudging," remarks Procopio. "You'll hear, 'I took this photograph with a 50mm, but it's really like a 30mm, and the depth of field would be different — kind of.' It seemed natural [to me] to eliminate the guesswork."

The Fortune's Finder takes advantage of the similar scale between 35mm motion picture and still formats. Though both of the formats are nearly identical in physical dimensions, their negative image area is not, because the film is oriented horizontally in still cameras and vertically in motion picture cameras. In both formats, however, the image areas are wider than they are high. Since it's larger, the still camera image can contain an entire motion picture image in its own image area. This will allow a 35mm still camera fitted with the Fortune's Finder kit to function as a director's viewfinder, and photographs may be taken complete with framelines while lining up shots.









"The point is that still photography equipment is readily available," Procopio notes. "Many people already own it, and it can be made into a more useful viewfinder than any available."

The easy-to-install system includes a custom focusing screen and an ultra-thin piece of optical glass. A variety of 35mm still camera brands are supported, with others currently being tested. Both the focusing screen and the optical glass are precisely scribed with the framelines for the aforementional 35mm motion picture aspect ratios. On a still camera, the focusing screen replaces the standard screen and will reveal through the viewfinder the exact boundaries of the motion picture image areas. The optical glass insert is mounted in the camera aperture immediately ahead of the film plane so that the film, when exposed, will be marked with the motion picture frame format lines, matching exactly what is seen through the viewfinder. The glass insert can be mounted permanently or temporarily without altering the camera in any way, and can be affixed in place simply with transparent tape.

Each lens used will function exactly as it would on a motion picture camera, allowing for the precise angle of view and accurate depths of field according to the f-stop selected. The camera's data-back function (which can record numeric information onto the photograph) can still be utilized. The numeric focal length of a lens and the f-stop used on a given photograph may be imprinted through simple programming of the data back, providing further detail for storyboards or location scouting.

"I've always felt that thorough preparation was creatively liberating," contends Procopio. "The photo studies made using this system are so revealing that it is easier to make informed choices

The Fortune's Finder SLR still camera conversion kit allows the user to imprint Academy, 1.33:1, 1.85:1 and Super 35 framelines onto still photographs.

during preproduction and even during production when the pressure is on and the clock is ticking."

For more information on this system and a list of cameras supported by the Fortune's Finder, visit the Web site www.fortunatoprocopio.com.

Updated Panther Products

Panther GmbH recently unveiled a range of new and improved camera-support equipment.

Panther has redesigned its Evolution camera dolly. Developed in cooperation with grips and cameramen, the dolly has a patent-pending crab and steer/shift box where the wheels may be steered from two sides and rotated 360 degrees to allow for circular drives without noise from the wheels. The height-adjustable steering rod can be mounted on all four wheel arms. The steering wheel, which mounts onto the steering rod, contains a hollow in its center for an accessories box, as well as the new digital hand-control set from which all of the dolly's functions may be operated.



The Panther column has graphic and numerical marks all around the column height in percentages, centimeters and inches. The maximum lifting speed for the column is two seconds. A Goretex cover protects the column from moisture, sand and dirt. The maintenance-free spindle holder is designed so that it will not be damaged in the event of a column crash. Inside safety switches stop the column movement if it hits an obstacle. A second safety nut prevents a sudden drop of the column if the spindle nut should break.

The column features a new brushless drive technology for accurate pedestalling at extremely fast and slow speeds. An illuminated display on the entirely electronic front panel shows height, speed and ramps. The front panel offers the possibility of programming positions, movements and limits.

The Evolution's column and body have been designed as one compact unit that does not need to be dismantled for transportation purposes. With a weight of 96 kg (210 lbs), it may be carried in one piece, but for longer distances, a special transport cart is available. Ground clearance has been improved, and the

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complete width of the dolly has been reduced without forsaking stability.

A heat-insulated seat can be adjusted in length and height for the camera operator. With few exceptions, the complete line of Panther dolly accessories — including a new side-mounted tool box — can be used with the Evolution.

Panther has also improved its Precision Vario Tracks with the new Mk II version. The track is designed with a new, easier-to-maintain surface that is more resistant to scratches, and the transitions are fitted with steel caps for better protection during transport. The side stability of the tracks has been increased due to more stable track runners set at step width. These are available in the regular (stiff) version or in the Vario version, which may be telescoped up to 1m (3'3"). The track is foldable and usable for gauges ranging from 36cm to 100cm in 0.5m (1.5'), 1m (3'), 2m (6'), 3m (9'), and special-length sizes. Tracks are also available in 45-degree curves or in custom configurations upon inquiry.

The new Panther Foxy Crane System is both lightweight and compact. The crane column, known as the "pyramid," can house the complete crane inside itself for transportation. That is, the base simultaneously functions as the transport cart for the complete crane and can be set up by just one person in minutes. Constructed of aircraft aluminum, the Foxy can serve as both a platform crane and a remote crane due to its wide base. The multi-function system comes with air, studio and track wheels.

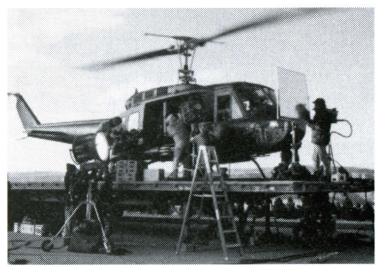
Four versions of the Foxy Crane System are available — two platform cranes with platform heights of 3.2m (10.5') and 4.4m (14.5'), and two remote cranes with remote boom heights of 5.8m (19') and 7m (23'). The complete crane system's dimensions in transportation mode are 190cm x 88cm x 124cm.

Panther also offers the Combi Offset Bracket, which provides more camera-mounting possibilities. The 4 kg. (8 lbs.) bracket can be adjusted horizontally up to 30cm (1') in length by turning the clamping lever without removing the camera. The height is adjustable in two 6cm (2.5") increments. The bracket comes with a 150mm bowl (which may be replaced with a 100mm bowl or a Mitchell adapter). The Combi Offset Bracket supports a payload of 80 kg (176 lbs), making it suitable for video, 16mm and 35mm cameras.

Panther GmbH, +49 89 613 900 01, fax +49 089 613 1000; e-mail: contact@panther-gmbh.de; Web site: www.panther-gmbh.de.

Complete Aerial Assistance

New York-based Aerial Cinema Productions and Los Angeles-based Production Helicopters Inc. have teamed to offer "Full Service Aerial Production," a complete package of experienced flight crews, professional personnel and top-of-the-line equipment that will handle any production's helicopter needs in the U.S., Canada or the Caribbean.



Veteran pilots Ray McCort (of Aerial Cinema Productions) and Geoff Palmer (of Production Helicopters Inc.) have together formed a network of helicopter operators throughout the country, allowing this new venture to provide a wide selection of aircraft to fulfill a variety of production needs. McCort and Palmer are both SAG pilots, and have each worked on feature films, commercials, music videos, documentaries, industrials and independent films. They have over 20,000 hours of flying time between them.

This venture is FAA-certified with an approved motion picture manual, allowing the pilots to provide safe and legal filming at low altitudes. Their all-turbine helicopter fleet is equipped with pop-out safety floats, if needed, for over-water operations, and can support a vari-

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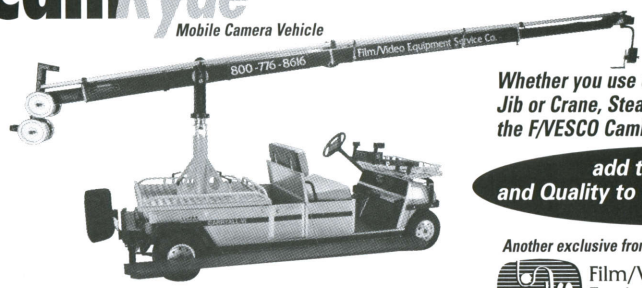
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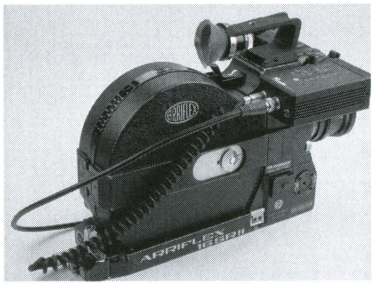
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ety of camera system platforms (both gyrostabilized and mechanical), including the Spacecam and Wescam systems, and the Continental Major Mount, Tyler Nose and Middle Mounts (all available with gyro assist).

The aircraft may be used in various production roles, as story ships, military gun ships, or as location scouting vehicles. McCort and Palmer can also provide additional personnel, including aerial-unit directors, producers, ground-safety coordinators, camera assistants, production assistants and FAA-certified mechanics.

McCort and Palmer recently provided services during production of the Warner Bros. action picture *Chill Factor*, supplying a fleet of four military attack helicopters for a chase sequence through the canyons of Monument Valley, Utah.

Aerial Cinema Productions, (212) 714-6037; Production Helicopters, (310) 474-7375.



Arri SR Video Tap

Lee Utterbach Cameras of San Francisco is now offering the J-Bar Video Tap option for Arriflex SR-1 and SR-2 16mm cameras. The rugged modular unit has built-in focus and iris adjustments.

The Utterbach unit mounts onto a regular SR viewfinder and is compatible with virtually any ½" CCD video camera in either C- or CEI-mount. The video tap still allows the use of the "swing-over" viewfinder capability, so the camera may be packed in a small case and hand-carried during air travel.

Installation of the J-Bar Tap requires clients to send in their camera viewfinder for modification — a process that is completely reversible, even while

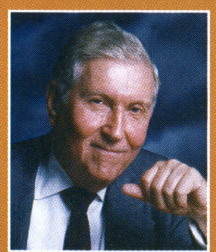
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Gun for Hire in Miami Beach

New York-based studio The Shooting Gallery has opened the Gun for Hire Production Center (GFHPC) in Miami Beach, its first outside the NYC metropolitan area. The center is designed to take a production through all phases as efficiently as possible by consolidating the production and postproduction needs of producers into one integrated facility. The GFHPC will fill holes in Miami's production industry, making available services not usually offered in the area. "We are now in Miami to make production easier and more efficient at all ends with a one-stop shop facility created to meet the specific needs of producers who desire to work in South Florida," said C.J. Follini, president of the GFHPC.

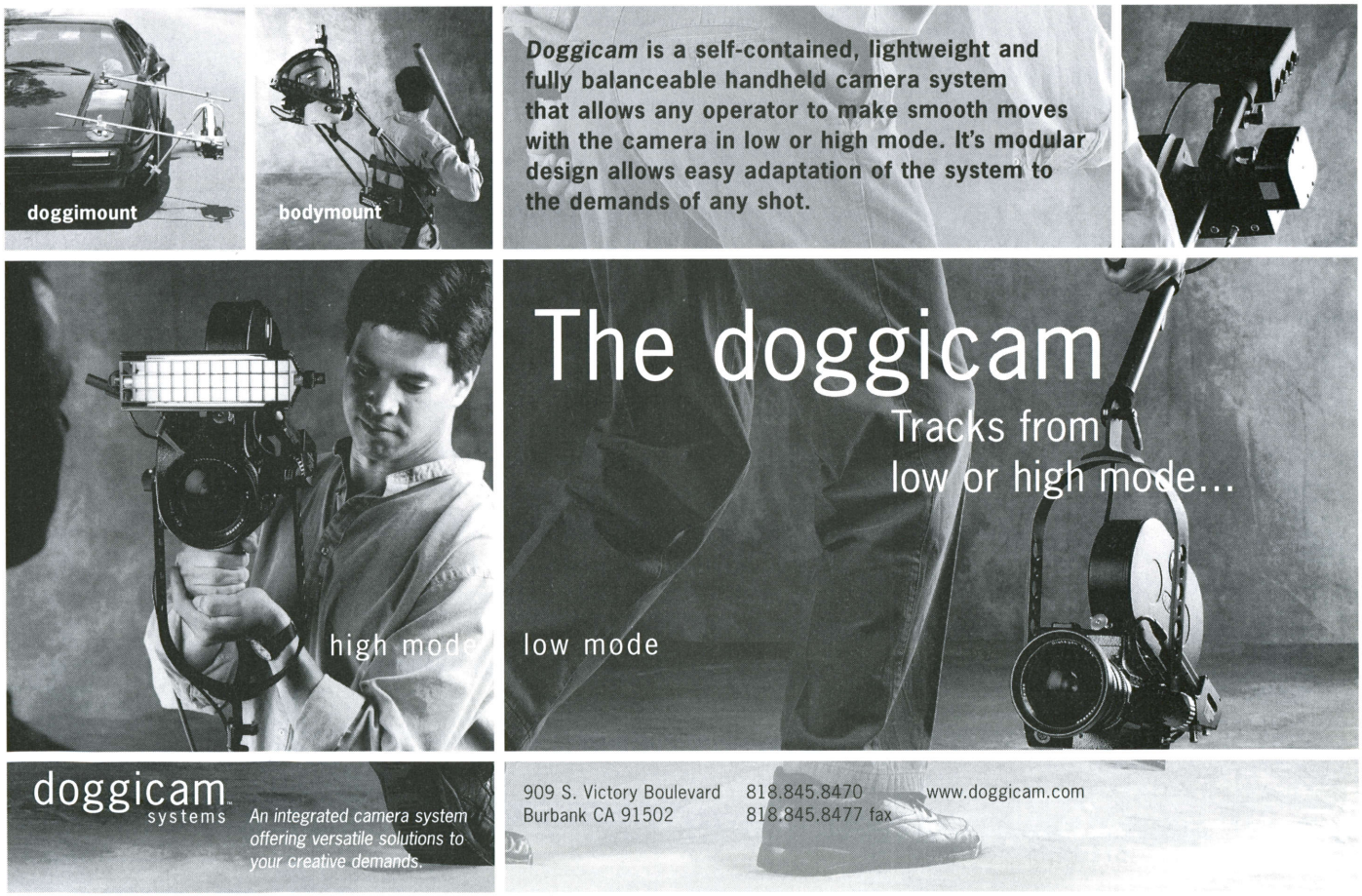
The 20,000 square-foot Miami center contains fully equipped production space and editing suites. A second phase of construction will double the center's size. All of The Shooting Gallery's Manhattan-based ancillary divisions, which offer background services such as accounting, location scouting and postproduction, will be provided at the Miami center as well. The GFHPC will provide producers with experienced line producers and supervisors in a fully staffed and equipped infrastructure.

The Shooting Gallery plans to open additional GFHPC facilities in Vancouver and Toronto.

Gun For Hire Production Center of Miami, (305) 604-1GUN, fax (305)-604-0GUN, Web site: www.shootinggallery.com.

Québec Animation Coalesces

Twenty Québec-based companies specializing in 2-D and 3-D animation and digital visual effects have teamed together to form the Québec Animation association in Montreal. The purpose of the conglomerate is to showcase animation and visual effects talent in the French-Canadian provincial capital, as well as to develop a network of international partners in film, television and commercial production to create new business opportunities within the entertainment industry. "Montreal has a rich tradition of animation, and in the last decade, the city has seen a boom in technology for the entertainment industry, " says Montreal-based Tube Images Inc. executive producer Roddy McManus, who is also the spokesperson for and a member of Québec Animation (Q-A). "The goal of Québec Animation is to create awareness, and to forge win-win partnerships with international companies in an effort to mutually develop and export our creative talent to the rest of the world."



The 20 companies that make up the Québec Animation association are all independent entities with individual expertise in visual effects, 2-D and 3-D animation, character design, set extension, compositing, motion graphics and broadcast design. Indeed, as the organization's Web site states, Q-A is a "pool of companies at the high end." The group will strive to draw attention to the individual companies' strengths. The two types of partnerships Q-A will seek to forge are oriented toward content creation and service provision. The association will represent animation production studios for co-production, distribution and international partnerships in the exporting of content such as cartoon shows.

The other type of partnership the association will nurture involves the offering of services to the international community to create films, television shows and commercials that require visual effects. "The association isn't there to try to win work," points out McManus. "It's there to promote all the companies. Each individual company is still pretty much on its own to find or create projects."

Q-A as a whole, and the individual companies themselves, will work closely with Québec-based technology companies such as Discreet Logic, Softimage, ToonBoom and Kaydara.

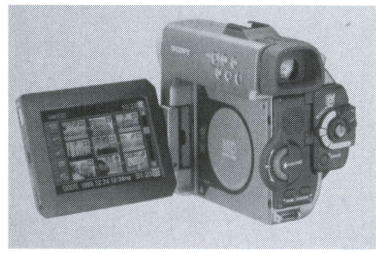
The idea for Québec Animation originated from Danny Bergeron, the president of Tube Images. However, his initial attempt to pull the Montreal companies together — many of whom considered each other competitors — raised quite a few eyebrows. "Oh, that was really easy, I'll tell you!" McManus jokes. "The first meeting was kind of 'You want to do what?'"

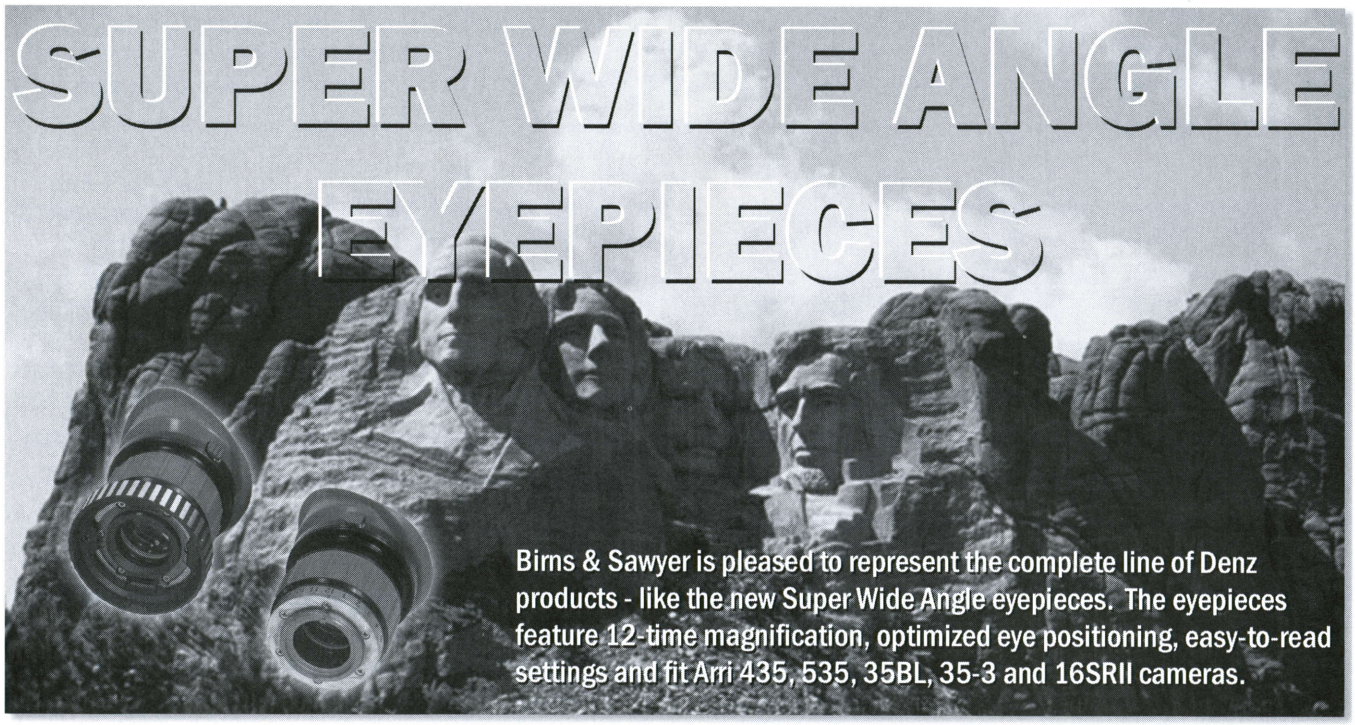
The animation and visual effects community eventually warmed up to the idea, though. "All of the companies that became involved got to know each other a lot better, and began to realize that we're all trying to export something a little bit different," he observes. "All of us have something different to offer the international community."

For more information on Québec Animation and the 20 companies comprising the association, visit Q-A's Web site at www.quebec-animation.org.

Disc-Based Digital Camcorder

Sony has released the DCM-M1 MD Discam, a disc-based digital camcorder with video capture and editing capabilities all in the same unit. The DCM-M1 uses Sony's MiniDisc technol-

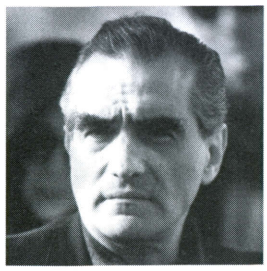




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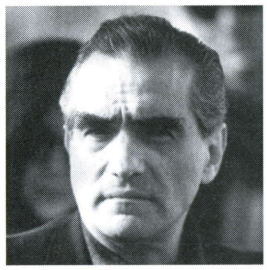
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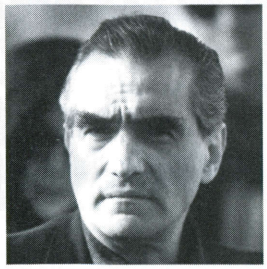


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ogy, which was developed originally for audio to provide instant random access.

The MD Discam can record up to 20 minutes of video in LP mode with real-time MPEG2 encoding on a removable MD Data Disc 2 and up to 4,500 still images. The MD Data2 media, dubbed MD View, was developed to handle the high-capacity video storage needs of the camcorder, holding 650MB of audio/video rewritable data. Up to 260 minutes of audio can be recorded using ATRAC encoding that ends up as the MD View format. Thanks to the magneto-optical technology shared by MD View and MiniDisc audio, the camcorder will play recorded and prerecorded audio MiniDiscs.

The camcorder features a 680K-pixel, ¼" CCD imaging system capable of delivering more than 400 lines of horizontal resolution, and a 180K-pixel color viewfinder. Optics are provided by an f1.7-2.2, 3.3-33mm (42-420mm in 35mm camera mode) 10x optical/40x digital zoom lens. The full-auto/manual-focus lens accepts 30mm filters. The digital zoom has improved interpolation for cleaner zooming with less blocking and distortion than other types of digital zoom technologies.

Through disc-based direct access, the Scene Shuffle mode allows on-the-spot editing. A 184K-pixel swivel LCD screen also serves as an onscreen touch panel, with a supplied stylus can be used to select commands such as play, copy, move, trim, erase and others during editing. The touch sensitive onscreen navigation menu is managed by a Personal Java 2.0 Powered Graphical User Interface, and offers the user helpful hints during editing or playback. The stylus can be used on the screen to write custom titles of up to 100 characters in the Titling mode, and drawings or simple clip-art graphics may also be added. Because the notations and graphic are not embedded into the recorded material, they may be easily removed at any time. Three types of "in" transitions (such as Fade In) and eight "out" transitions (e.g. Fade Out) may be applied between scenes.

Video and audio I/O is done

through special mini A/V jacks. Still images and JPEG video may also be transferred into a personal computer through an Ethernet port using a web browser as the interface. Headphone output and microphone input is done through stereo mini jacks.

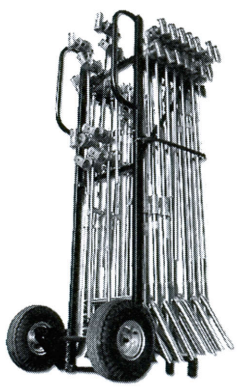
Four picture effects are provided for additional creativity: black-and-white, sepia, mosaic and slow-motion. Several types of playback are provided for flexibility, including repeat play, A/B repeat, shuffle play and nine-frame sequence, which will display nine consecutive frames from any scene. The Crystal Clear Slow Motion Playback function provides variable-rate, frame-by-frame slow-motion viewing of any video sequence.

The MD Discam is powered by a Sony InfoLithium rechargeable battery with the AccuPower Meter system, which indicates the amount of power remaining in minutes on the LCD screen. The 38.4 x 20.6 x 70.8mm camcorder comes with the battery, charger, AC cable, Ethernet adapter cable, and an A/V cable. Optional accessories include a DC adapter, a wide-angle lens converter, a teleconversion lens, a tripod, a microphone, a video light and a carrying bag.

Sony: 1-800-222-SONY (7669); Web site www.sony.com.

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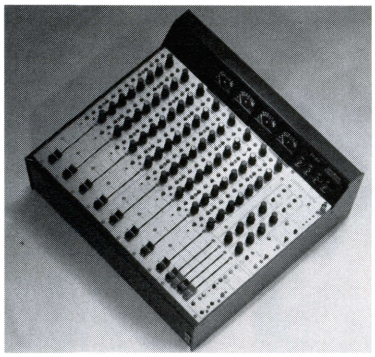
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weight. Due to the cart's design, the load weight that it carries is not a factor. The C-stand cart is constructed of 14-gauge tubular steel and has a black powder-coated finish. It can hold 14 complete C-stands and four gobo heads with arms. Several C-stand brand-specific options are available. The cart weighs 52 lbs and is 60.5" high, 50.5" deep and 23.5" wide. It features 10" pneumatic rubber tires and non-skidding rubber stumpers.

Concept Lighting, Inc., (818) 767-1122, fax (818) 768-9900, Web site: www.conceptlight.com.

Audio Mixer

Cooper Sound Systems, Inc. of Cambria, California has released the CS 208 portable audio mixer. The new six- to eight-channel mixer is an update of the CS 106/108 audio mixers.



The CS 208 features eight modular input channels, but is also available with six channels in the same chassis, four main busses and two auxiliary, two remote rolls, two stereo tape returns, and three stereo phones out with private line. The new mic preamp is designed for even lower noise. The four analog meters are available in either PPM or VU measurements.

The all-metal chassis has a durable weather-resistant coating, and contains a variety of high-quality components, including Jensen transformers, P& G faders, Sifam meters and sealed plastic potentiometers. The flexible output connectors use XLR, TQG and DB9 connectors. All connectors are on the front or back panels. The CS 208 is compatible with analog and digital audio recorders. Its remote rolls are compatible with a variety of systems, such as Nagra, HHB and Fostex.

The CS 208 weighs 19 lbs. without batteries. Twelve D-cell batteries internally power the 16.5" x 15" x 5" unit. THD + N is .003 percent. Signal-to-noise ratio is -129.5 dBu at 150 ohms from 20-20k. A-weighted signal-to-noise is -131.2 dBu at 150 ohms.

Cooper Sound Systems, Inc., (805) 927-8521, fax (805) 927-8565, Web site: www.coopersound.com.

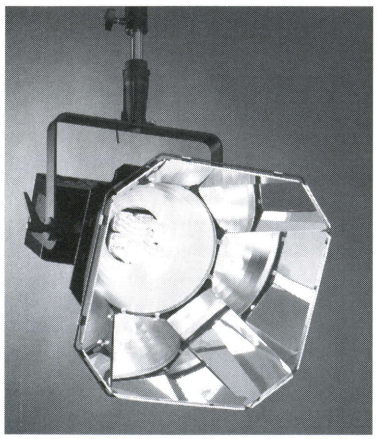
Plus8Video in New York

California-based Plus8Video, which offers the largest rental inventory of digital HD production equipment in the United States, has opened an office and rental facility in New York City called Plus8New York. The new facility will provide the area with high-definition, NTSC and PAL equipment, ranging from camcorders to multicamera systems and accessories. Henry Bornstein, formerly of Broadcast Video Rentals, will head the new NYC operation with a focus on expanding HD applications.

Plus8New York, (212) 947-9797, fax (212) 947-1790.

Efficient Fluorescent Fixtures

Balcar of France has introduced the new Powerflux 1 and 2 fluorescent lamps. The 170W Powerflux 1 and 340W Powerflux 2 uses Ra 80 3200°K, 4200°K or 5000°K fluorescent bulbs and can effectively light subjects 10 to 25 feet away. The unique reflector design provides the same effect as a Fresnel fitted with a light diffuser and is six times



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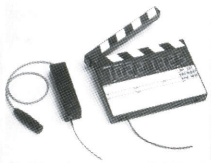
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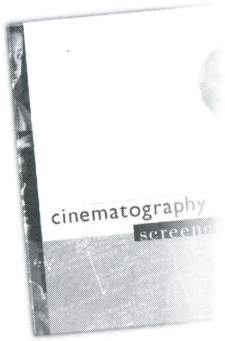
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Cinematography Screencraft

by Peter Ettedgui

The 17 directors of photography profiled in this book encompass three generations of filmmaking, representing a wide range of visual styles — from *The African Queen* to *Delicatessen*. Lavishly illustrated with over 500 color pictures, 300 black-and-white photos, and numerous diagrams, this reference features informative accompanying text based on interviews with each cinematographer. This is a perfect book for practicing professionals, students, and movie buffs alike.

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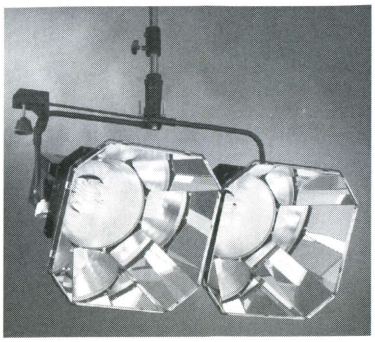
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Points East

Exciting Times at the School of Visual Arts

by Eric Rudolph



Gordon Willis, ASC imparts his wisdom to a group of attentive pupils during a seminar at SVA.

Photo by Eric Rudolph.

In a town that is the home to several famous film schools, the Film, Video and Animation department of the School of Visual Arts (SVA) is sometimes overlooked. But while titans NYU and Columbia get most of the attention, New York's SVA is doing anything but sitting still.

As an example of SVA's initiative, the school recently hosted legendary cinematographer Gordon Willis, ASC in a series of guest lectures. Additionally, during this academic year, a group of top SVA film students will have the chance to write and produce a 35mm feature film in collaboration with students from a film school in Israel.

The feature film project is a key part of SVA's new BRIDGE (Building Relations Internationally Developing Global Education) program, which will provide opportunities for young filmmakers from around the world to work together. Thanks to a grant from Czech film producer Jirina Zdrazilova, SVA has close to $250,000 with which to produce a 35mm feature film. The generous grant was made after veteran Czech director/writer and SVA instructor Vojtech Jasny told Zdrazilova about SVA's film education approach and the embryonic BRIDGE program. "Jirina loved the BRIDGE idea and wanted to ensure that something solid, like a feature film, came from it," explains Reeves Lehman, the chair of SVA's Film, Video and Animation department.

The screenplay for the BRIDGE feature is currently being developed by 10 top screenwriting students from both SVA and Israel's Camera Obscura film and arts school. The students are working in teams of two on five different original screenplay ideas. At press time, the Israeli students were in New York taking a special, intensive screenwriting course alongside the SVA students. The final treatment for the feature script will be chosen from this group of ideas during a comprehensive winnowing process.

The project's key behind-the-camera roles, including those of director and cinematographer, will be chosen in a similar manner, as top students in each specialty (from both schools) will be evaluated by faculty members, who will decide on the final composition of the feature team. The film will be shot in both the United States and Israel. "We hope that the initial BRIDGE feature film will lead to similar arrangements with other film schools around the world," Lehman says. He adds that if the first feature film is picked up for distribution, any profits would be put back into the BRIDGE program.

The Israeli involvement in this unusual program came about after Lehman met the head of the Camera Obscura film department at an international student film festival held every other year in Israel. "I found out that SVA and Camera Obscura share a similar approach to film education and have the same enthusiasm and goals," he recalls. "SVA's philosophy is simple: we strive to educate and prepare the filmmakers of tomorrow by exposing them to the highest possible level of filmmaking professionals. Our teachers are all working filmmakers; we have no tenured faculty. We also stress a hands-on approach at SVA; we have a lot of up-to-date equipment, and our students discover its potential from the people who make films for a living."

This focus on instruction by working filmmakers isn't the only thing that makes SVA stand out.

The school requires every film student to take two acting courses, Acting for Film and Acting and Directing, both taught by members of the renowned Actor's Studio. The study of

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ASC Books, Clothing, Products and other merchandise will be on sale.

Opportunities to have ASC books signed by ASC members will also be available, as well as American Cinematographer subscriptions and back issues.

acting is a requirement that Lehman feels other major film schools overlook. "Requiring every film student to take acting classes goes to the very heart of SVA's curriculum," he says. "The most important thing to a successful film, after a good screenplay, is that the filmmakers relate to the actors. The performances, of course, can make or break a film."

The requirement for film students to study acting came after Academy Award-winning actor Paul Newman (who has also been a producer and director) complained to Lehman about the insensitivity of new film directors to actors. At the time, Newman was president of the Actor's Studio, with which SVA has had a long relationship.

Lehman feels that SVA's acting study requirement has been vindicated by the recent spate of actor-directed movies. He mentions films by occasional actor Quentin Tarantino and veteran thesps Robert Duvall, Mel Gibson, Sean Penn and Steve Buscemi (who lectured at SVA about his critically acclaimed directorial debut *Trees Lounge*) as examples of actors using their onscreen experience to make good films from behind the camera.

When Lehman says that top professional filmmakers teach SVA students about filmmaking, he's not kidding. Cinematographer Gordon Willis, ASC (*The Godfather* series, *Annie Hall, Manhattan, Klute, The Parallax View*) has guest-lectured at the SVA for the past several years. This past summer, Willis gave an extraordinary four-day seminar during which he showed scenes from the films listed above (as well as others he has photographed) and discussed, in detail, why and how the various photographic choices were made on some of America's most highly regarded movies.

AC was privileged to attend the Willis seminar, and found it to be just as impressive as it sounds. The low-key, amiable Willis was generous in discussing his philosophy, and offered patient and encouraging instruction to the attendees, who ranged in experience from total neophytes to working cinematographers. "Everyone who took the Gordon Willis seminar was ecstatic," Lehman says. Willis is expected to give another version of the seminar in 2000, probably in a pair of two-day sessions. (The cameraman, whose last film was *The Devil's Own,* is not retired; he says he simply hasn't been offered any compelling scripts recently.)

Willis was initially invited to lecture at SVA by teacher Sal Petrocino. But how did a lesser-known film school snare so much time from one of America's greatest living cinematographers? "They were the first to ask me," says Willis in his customarily droll manner, speaking from his New England home. "I'm always surprised when people express interest in my work. However, if people are really interested in movies, then I feel I have something to say to them. The people who run SVA are not film dilettantes, and I'm quite comfortable with them. I also thought the students at the seminar were a very good, mixed bag of people."

Willis emphasizes that he doesn't like teaching the mechanics of cinematography. He says that his only reservation about the seminar students was that they asked *how* he did certain things more often than *why*. "It is the *why* that is the most important," he insists. "How and why are sisters in the thought process, but once you know why you're doing something with a camera or lights, it is easy to decide how to do it."

Lehman says with pride, "We thought it was a testimony to the SVA film program that Gordon Willis would come to the school several times to talk to one of our classes, and then return for an extensive four-day seminar. Gordon is a bit shy, and he normally doesn't do this sort of thing. We're honored that he would take the time to share his wealth of knowledge and experience with our students." ■

Books in Review

by Ray Zone

Screencraft Series: Cinematography
by Peter Ettedgui
Focal Press
208 pps, paperbound ($34.95)
ISBN 0-240-80382-5

Here is a must-have book for anyone with an interest in cinematography. The contents of this book are so good, in fact, that it's a shame they aren't showcased more effectively. This is a large (9" x 12") book that's suitable for the coffee table, but the small type and abundance of white space on each page makes one wonder why the gorgeous images aren't given more than the two inches they're generally allotted.

The roster of cinematographers included in the book is stellar, and the text comprises interview material structured so that each cinematographer speaks in his own words, directly to the reader, in a very intimate and engaging fashion. Their personal insights are both invaluable and inspiring.

The book opens with a marvellous reminiscence by Jack Cardiff, BSC, the great cinematographer responsible for Michael Powell's *The Red Shoes*, *Stairway to Heaven* and *Black Narcissus*. This section alone is worth the price of the book. The son of vaudeville actors, Cardiff was a veteran actor in silent films at the age of 14, and by 15 was operating the camera on a film called *Harmony Heaven*. He was most influenced by painting, and two full-color pages in this section showcase relevent works by Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Vermeer and Gauguin. Cardiff remarks on the artists' use of light, detailing its influence upon his cinematography.

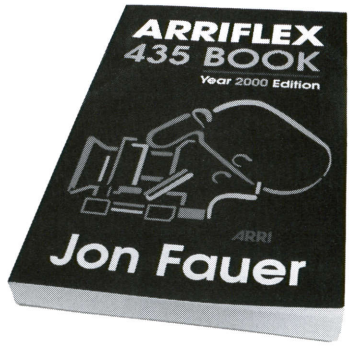
Other expert cinematographers are equally illuminating. Douglas Slocombe, BSC recalls his work at Ealing Studios in the '40s and '50s shooting the wry and classic British comedies *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The Lavendar Hill Mob* and *The Man in the White Suit*, and also shares an amusing anecdote about the on-set challenges he confronted while filming *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Sven Nykvist, ASC discusses his work with both Ingmar Bergman and Woody Allen. A lovely chapter by Subrata Mitra poignantly sketches his development as a lighting cameraman while filming the landmark *Apu* trilogy with renowned Indian director Satyajit Ray. In order to match set and location lighting, Mitra came up with some unique bounce-lighting techniques.

Other great stories and insights are offered by ASC members Michael Chapman, Roger Deakins, Janusz Kaminski, Darius Khondji, Laszlo Kovacs, John Seale, Haskell Wexler and Gordon Willis. Top cinematographers such as Raoul Coutard, Stuart Dryburgh, Robby Müller, NSC, BVK, Eduardo Serra, AFC, and Billy Williams, BSC are also included. This volume is a genuine celebration of light and its use in the craft of cinematography.

Movies at Home: How Hollywood Came to Television
by Kerry Segrave
McFarland & Company, Inc.
263 pps, library binding
($38.50)
ISBN 0-7864-0654-2

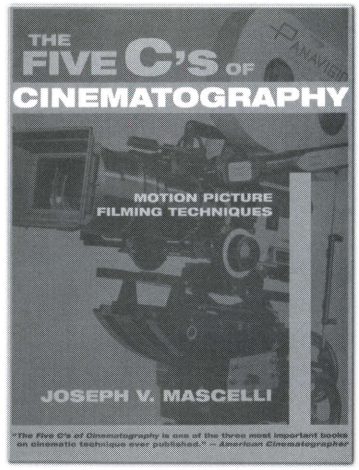
Growing up as a "boomer baby" in the 1950s, I remember my first exposure to classic movies on television. I was thrilled to see vintage cinematic fare, but also constantly chagrined by the incessant commercial interruptions. In the late 1950s, KHJ Channel 9, covering

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The Five C's is one of the most widely respected books on filmmaking ever published. With the aid of hundreds of photographs and diagrams, it clearly and concisely presents the essential concepts and techniques of motion picture camerawork, and how these impact the allied areas of filmmaking.
Paperback, 8 ½" x 11", 251pgs.

the Southern California area, inaugurated the "Million Dollar Movie" program, which presented fine films several times daily for an entire week. Although I always found myself wondering what footage had been "cut" for television, I still sought out classic fare on TV.

With solid research, author Kerry Segrave tells the story of how feature films were brought to television. His book includes a voluminous bibliography, and cites sources that range from *Variety* to *Time* magazine. His research in the trade publications even reveals the miniscule amount of money that TV stations paid in the early 1950s for movie rights (as little as $35 in smaller markets). Segrave methodically tracks the growth of revenues to the point where the movie studios eventually reaped fortunes from the television market, despite their initial fear of and resistance to the tube.

Television began to proliferate just as motion picture attendance was dropping — from 80 million paid admissions per week in 1946 to 50 million in 1949. In 1948, five of the eight major studios were ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court to divest themselves of their theater chains. Movies accounted for 36 percent of household expenditures for entertainment in 1946, but by 1952 that number had plummeted to only 18.8 percent. Meanwhile, the presence of TV sets in U.S. homes rose from 0.2 percent to over 34 percent.

The major studios "sat on their assets," withholding motion picture fare from TV until 1955. However, independent producer Samuel Goldwyn foresaw a future for movies on TV, declaring that "nothing will stand in the way of full-length feature pictures in the home produced expressly for that purpose." He predicted "phone-vision," a form of pay-per-view for original programming.

In 1952, almost every TV station in America was telecasting movies during the late-night hours. These were generally older, independent films from smaller studios, along with a mixture of films from Great Britain. The big studios had made some cursory attempts with television theater, but by October of 1956, most of the major studios had made available to television all of their films that had been released before 1948.

Among those disgruntled by this development were several noted directors. John Ford, after viewing a "hacked down" version of his *Young Mr. Lincoln* on TV, remarked, "Your name's on it, but it isn't the thing you did." When Fred Zinneman watched a broadcast of *High Noon,* he complained, "They butchered the thing. They cut large chunks out of it. I got so mad I turned it off."

Eventually, technology and the market would grow and change to work on behalf of these film artists. In a chapter titled "Movies from the Sky, or the Corner Store, 1979-1998," Segrave brings his history up to date with a succinct recounting of satellite TV programming and the inception of the videocassette market.

The St. James Women Filmmakers Encyclopedia: Women On the Other Side of the Camera
Edited by Amy L. Unterburger
Visible Ink Press
568 pps, paperbound ($29.95)
ISBN 1-57859-092-2

A previous library edition of this encyclopedia, under the Gale Group imprint, sold to libraries in hardcover at $110. Were it slightly more definitive, this consumer edition would be an invaluable reference on women behind the camera. As it is, there are over 200 entries, alphabetically arranged to include film vocations such as producers, animators, art directors, editors, writers, costume designers and, of course, cinematographers. Each entry includes biographical information on its subject, a filmography and an in-depth profile with an analysis of the filmmaker's work.

The book has a solid historical scope, with excellent entries for Alice Guy, the world's first woman filmmaker (*The Cabbage Fairy*, 1896), and Lois Weber, the American silent film director who, by 1915, was one of the highest-paid directors in Hollywood. The most prolific screenwriter of all time may well have been Frances Marion, who scripted over 130 films from 1915 to 1940. Director Dorothy Arzner, meanwhile, was the first to use an overhead microphone when she affixed one to a fishing pole during filming of the first talkie directed by a woman (*The Wild Party*, 1929).

Avant-garde and experimental filmmakers such as Maya Deren (*Meshes of the Afternoon*, *Divine Horsemen*) and Shirley Clark (*The Connection*, *The Cool World*) are listed, as are such recent directors and producers as Martha Coolidge, Susan Seidelman, Jane Campion, Agnes Varda and Dawn Steel.

There are a few puzzling omissions, though, including director Mimi Leder (*Deep Impact*, *The Peacemaker*) and producers Lynda Obst (*The Siege*, *Hope Floats*) and Julia Phillips, who was the first female producer to win an Academy Award (*The Sting*, 1973). Additionally, only three cinematographers are included in this tome: Brianne Murphy, ASC (the first female member of the American Society of Cinematographers), Christine Choy (*In the Name of the Emperor*) and Maryse Alberti (*Happiness*, *Velvet Goldmine*, *Crumb*). ASC members who are *not* listed include Judy Irola, Ellen Kuras, Nancy Schreiber and Sandi Sissel. Several other talented female cinematographers were also omitted, including Caroline Champetier, Carolyn Chen, Roxanne DiSanto, Agnes Godard, Teresa Medina, Lisa Rinzler and Sue Gibson, BSC.

Hopefully this is only the first edition of what could prove to be a comprehensive encyclopedia. ■

BooksNow — To order these books (24hrs., 365 days), please call 800-266-5766 (ext. 1578), or visit us at http://www.booksnow.com/americancinematographer.htm. From outside the U.S., call 801-261-1187 (ext. 1578).

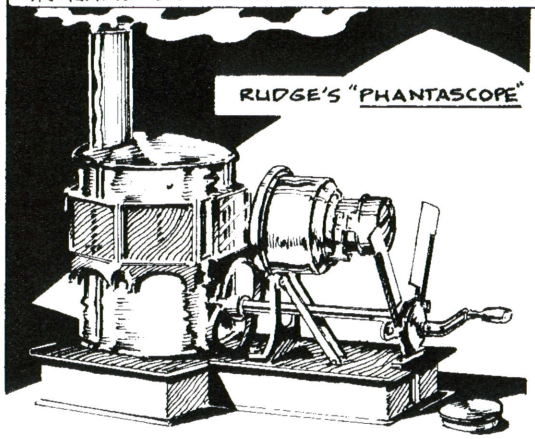
William Friese-Greene

by Ray Zone & Chuck Roblin

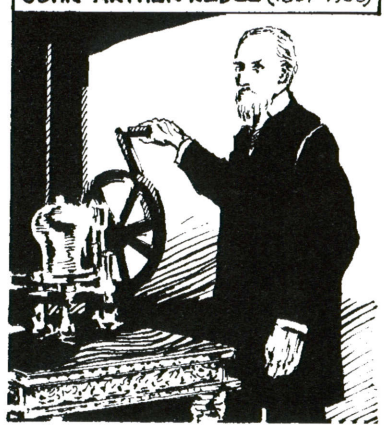
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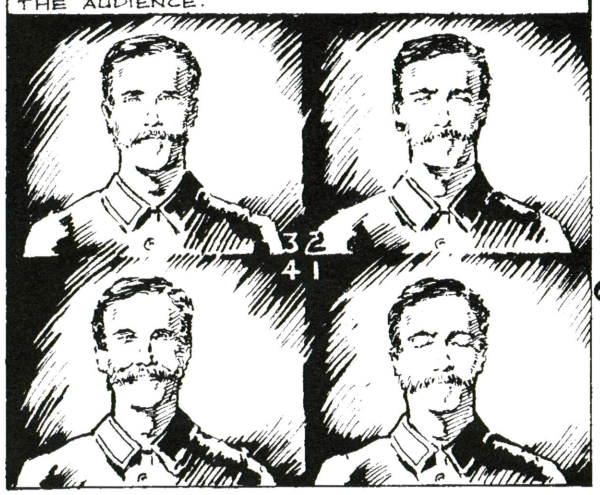
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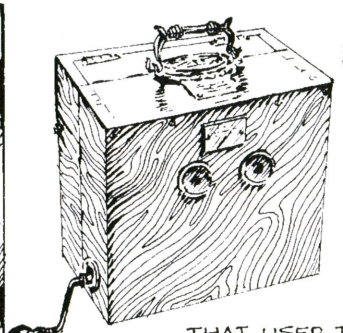
JOHN ARTHUR RUDGE (1837-1903)

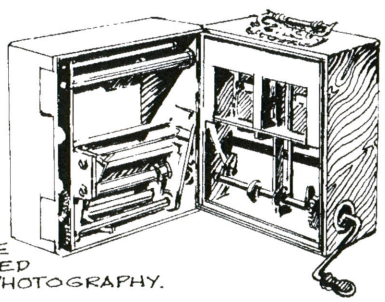


WITH THE "PHANTASCOPE" FRIESE-GREENE FILMED HIMSELF APPEARING TO AWAKEN AND SMILE AT THE AUDIENCE.



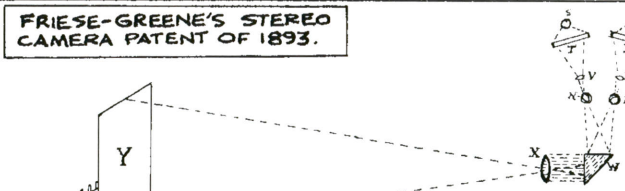
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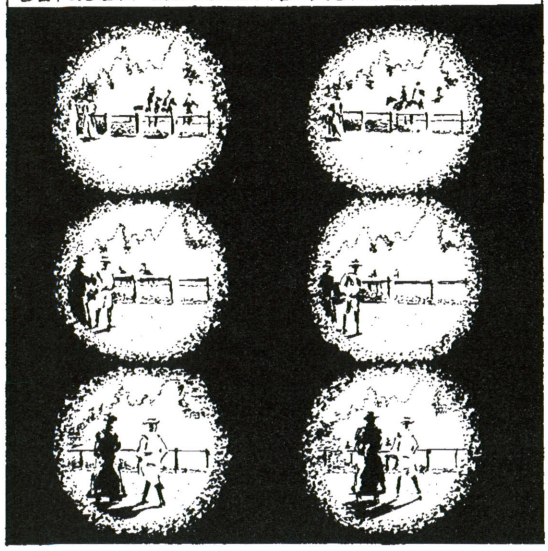


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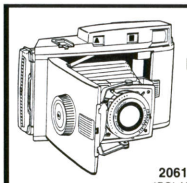
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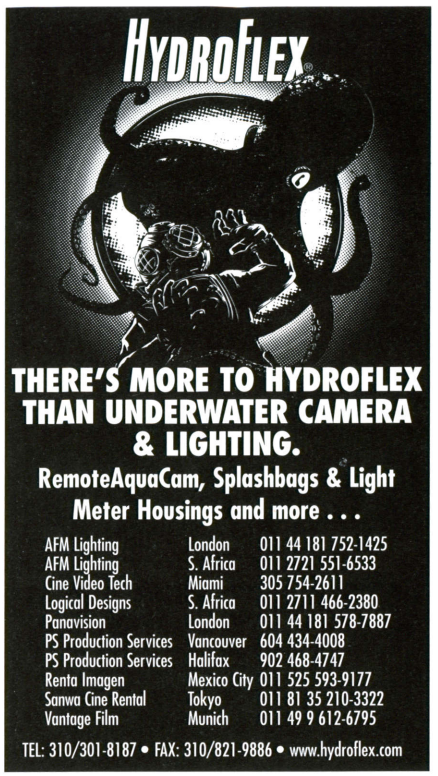


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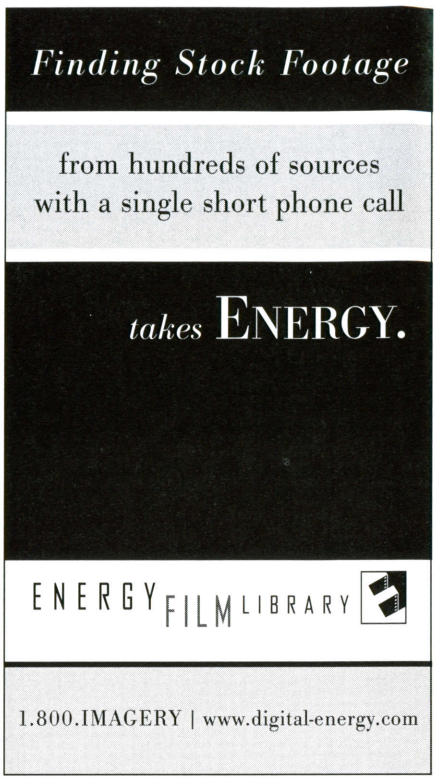
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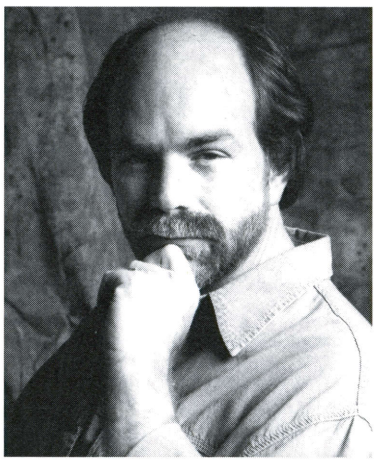
From the Clubhouse



New ASC Members

The Society recently inducted Lowell Peterson, Harris Savides and Stephen Lighthill as its newest active members.

After studying art and architecture at Yale and UCLA, **Lowell Peterson** determined that cinematography



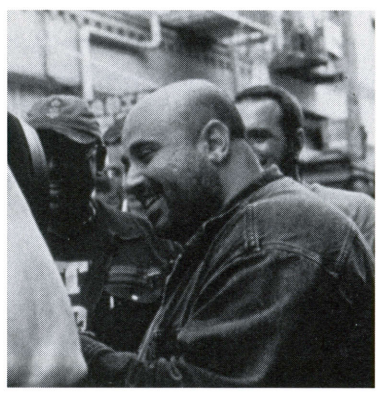
would offer him an excellent opportunity to apply his talents to an ever-changing canvas. He gained experience by working as a camera assistant on such television shows as *Hawaii Five-O* and *Newhart* before serving as an operator for Edward R. Brown, ASC on such programs as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Blind Ambition*. He did his first work as a director of photography on the drama *Knots Landing*.

Peterson's next series, *Second Chances*, earned him an ASC Award nomination for the episode "I Can't Get No Satisfaxion" (see *AC* May '94). The modestly budgeted series required a frugal aesthetic that Peterson didn't seem to mind. "We didn't use any TransLights — nothing that cost any money," he noted at the time. "I think photography is about lighting people — large-source lighting close to the actors."

Peterson's other television credits include *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, *The Client*, *Profiler* and *Ryan Caulfield: Year One*. He also kept up his *Star Trek* ties by handling second-unit photography on *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, and the feature *Star Trek: First Contact*.

Harris Savides studied film at the School of Visual Arts in New York, and assisted several still photographers after graduating. He soon moved to Paris and Milan to work on his own photography portfolio. Upon his return to the United States, he began shooting music videos for many artists, including David Bowie, Nine Inch Nails and Madonna, and commercials for clients such as Nike, Levi's and Calvin Klein. During that period, Savides worked with such directors as Ridley Scott, Mark Romanek and David Fincher.

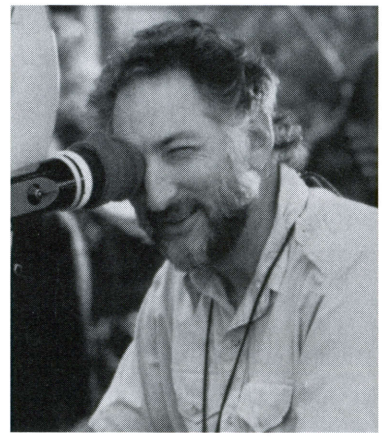
In 1996, Savides filmed his first studio feature, *Heaven's Prisoners*, for director Phil Joanou. He followed up with David Fincher's thriller *The Game* in 1997. Discussing his work on that film in the September '97 issue of *AC*, the cameraman explained, "This was a big-



budget movie, but we made a conscious decision to keep things simple with no tricky stuff. I wanted to tell the story without drawing undue attention to the lighting."

Savides's other credits include the telefilm *Lake Consequence* and the features *Illuminata* and *The Yards*, that latter of which is scheduled for theatrical release in 2000.

Stephen Lighthill made his first film in 1963 while studying journalism at

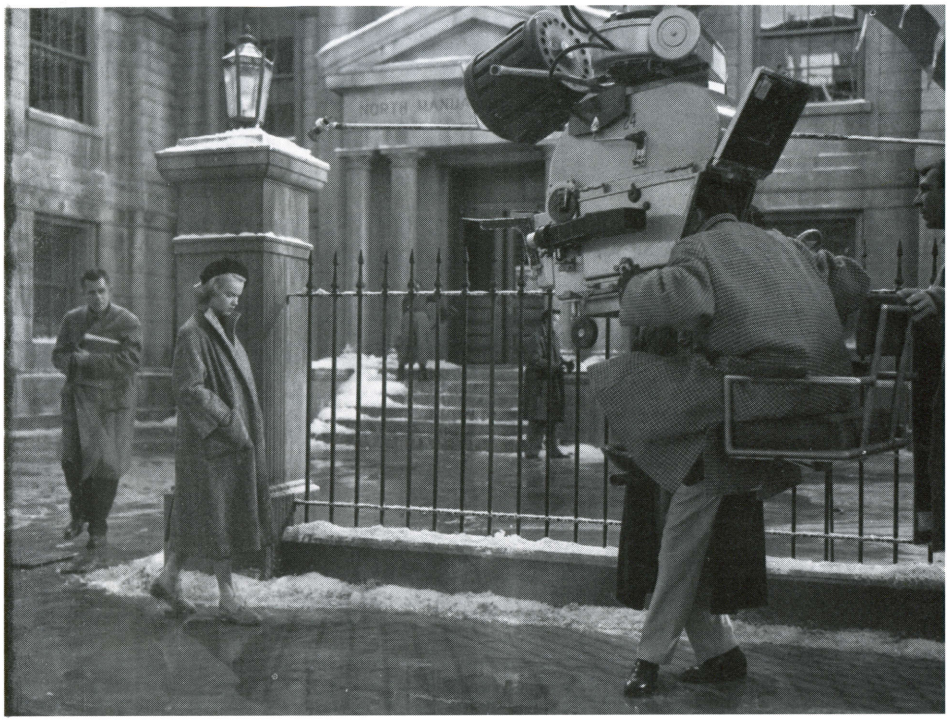


Boston University, and the project won a student film contest at San Francisco State University. After collecting his award, he settled in San Francisco to work in cinematography.

From 1964-74, Lighthill was a newsreel photographer for programs such as *CBS Evening News*, *60 Minutes* and *CBS Reports*. He began moving into the feature film realm during this time, serving as a camera assistant on George Lucas' *THX 1138*. He stepped into the director of photography role for long-form documentaries, two of which earned Oscar nominations: *Seeing Red* (1983) and *Berkeley in the Sixties* (1990). He has filmed a number of features, including *Spirit of '76* and *Open Season*, and has worked extensively in television on such series as *Vietnam War Story*, *Earth 2* and *Nash Bridges* (See *AC* Oct. '97).

"I've always had parallel careers in narrative and nonfiction filmmaking," he told *AC* in October 1997. "Documentaries give you a tremendous foundation. You learn the craft, because you are dealing with everything — lighting, putting up reflectors and adjusting lamps. I'm a minimalist at heart. I'll use the lamps we need to tell the story, but I believe the light given to us is almost always better than what I create." ■

WRAP SHOT



With his head in the blimp, Russell Harlan, ASC lines up a rehearsal shot in which tormented teacher Richard Didier (Glenn Ford) tries to catch up to his worried wife, Anne (Anne Francis).

The raw emotional power of rock 'n' roll music and the effect of juvenile delinquency on urban high schools in the 1950s were vividly brought to the public's attention with MGM's *Blackboard Jungle*. What caught the attention of cinematographers, however, was a new high-speed Eastman emulsion used to photograph the 1955 drama.

In the picture, instructor Richard Didier (Glenn Ford) returns to teaching in an New York inner-city school, only to be harassed by a gang of high-school thugs (led by Vic Morrow). Meanwhile, Didier's wife, Anne (Anne Francis), struggles to convince her husband to find another job.

Based on Evan Hunter's novel, *Blackboard Jungle* was adapted and directed by three-time Academy Award nominee Richard Brooks, who selected seasoned cinematographer Russell Harlan, ASC to shoot the picture. The cameraman's efforts on the film would earn him his first Academy Award nomination for Best Cinematography (he later garnered nods for *Hawaii*, *The Great Race* and *To Kill a Mockingbird).*

Certain technical issues arose when the filmmakers discussed their story of student malfeasance. Since many scenes would take place inside classrooms, Brooks wanted to stage the action so that dialogue between students sitting in both the front and back rows could be captured in one composition without the need for cuts or rack-focusing. However, such a deep depth of field would require a tremendous amount of light. Harlan also felt that the dramatic unrest called for a gritty, documentary-like realism, but without the usual graininess accompanying that style.

To achieve these desired effects, Harlan decided to shoot with a recently released, ultra-fast Eastman 5233 Tri-X Panchromatic 35mm film stock (a new product that was unveiled in *AC* July '54). *Jungle* became the second major motion picture filmed with the new emulsion; *Black Tuesday*, shot by Stanley Cortez, ASC toward the end of 1954, was the first (see *AC* Jan. '55). With its remarkable daylight speed of 250 ASA and tungsten speed of 200 ASA, the Tri-X was considered by many cinematographers of the time to be a "wonder" film. The stock was twice as fast as Eastman's 5232 Super-XX Negative Film, yet its grain structure was actually less apparent. In using the Tri-X on *Jungle*, Harlan achieved a level of illumination between 100 to 125 footcandles, and a stop of f5.6 on a 30mm lens, providing him with the depth of field necessary to cover the classroom interiors the way Brooks had envisioned them.

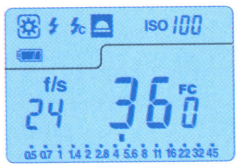
The high-speed Tri-X also produced impressive shadow detail, decreasing the amount of fill light that was needed and therefore saving setup time. "To give you an idea of the speed with which we shot," Harlan commented in the June 1955 issue of *AC*, "I might mention one sequence filmed on location in a high school auditorium packed with about 600 students. We worked with very few lights. Starting at 9:30 in the morning, we were finished at 10:45 and were back in the studio for lunch — something of a record, in view of the fact that if we had been shooting with ordinary black-and-white film, the sequence would have taken a full day or longer to shoot."

Harlan in fact took the "less light" notion one step further with the Tri-X stock. Average street scenes at night were photographed using only available light. No arc lights were used throughout the production, except for the occasional effect of sunlight coming through a window. "Tri-X Pan is a real cameraman's friend," Harlan noted. "You can shoot faster, lighting is greatly simplified, and when you need depth, you can get it without burning up the set. Not all pictures should be shot on Tri-X, but *Blackboard Jungle* was made to order for it. Not only did [the Tri-X] solve a lot of problems for us, but this picture gave us a chance to demonstrate all the advantages of this remarkable new negative."

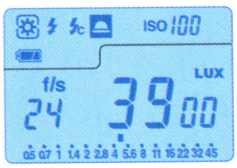
— Douglas Bankston

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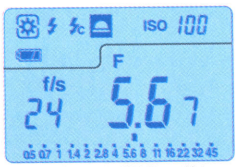
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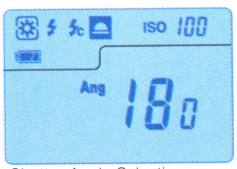
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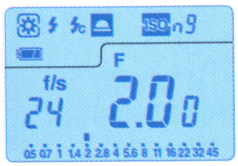
Lux + Shutter Speeds F.P.S. + f/stop



Shutter Speeds F.P.S. + f/stop



aShutter Angle Selection



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